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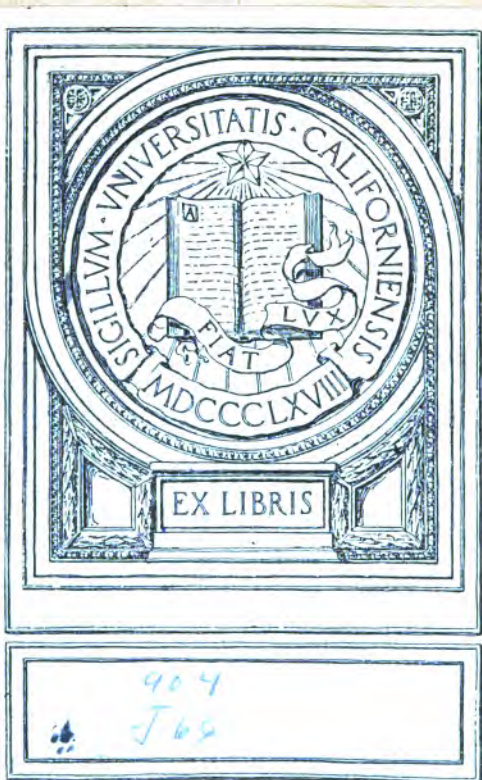
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# FORMS OF ENGLISH POETRY.

BY

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**FORMS OF ENG. POETRY.**

**W. P. I**



## PREFACE

THIS book contains nothing more than every young person should know about the construction of English verse, and its main divisions both by forms and by subject-matter. The historical development of eight of these divisions is sketched and briefly illustrated by examples, but the true character of poetry as an art and a social force has always been in the writer's mind. The study of prosody pure and simple is to most students of an average class wearisome and fruitless, though there are but few who do not become interested in poetry if the technical side is not exclusively regarded by the teacher. Such an interest naturally acquired in youth is of great value. It becomes part of character. It usually results from the atmosphere of the family, but it may be cultivated in the class room, and it is the object of this book to aid the teacher in doing so, either by its use as a text-book or by setting examinations on the chapters in connection with courses of reading. The study and analysis of a classic text to fulfill the requirements of admission to college frequently has the effect of creating a rooted distaste of literature and a sense of hopelessness of ever understanding why it is considered admirable. This is a regrettable result; for a love of imaginative literature, if not artificial or sentimental, is a valuable tonic in modern life, perfectly compatible with practical energy, and far more needed in intellectual development now than it was in the more romantic and credulous ages.

Only the elements of prosody are given, — only enough to show that verse has elements and a structure, — for any one can catch the beat of a line of verse accurately, and that is all that is necessary to æsthetic comprehension. Moreover, an ingenious physicist may at any time prove that the acoustic basis of verse is something different from what it has been supposed to be. Should he do so, his discovery would not in the least affect our method of reading nor the pleasure we take in poetry, though it might give us a “metric” and a “rhythmic” based on fact. Helmholtz’s discovery of the overtones had no effect on the art of music nor on the pleasure its votaries take in hearing a symphony, although it amplified the science of sound. It is only the elements of the science of verse of which we can be sure. Beyond them it is hardly prudent to venture at present and certainly not necessary.

This book is addressed to young people and to general readers. Still, the outline view of several departments that may be obtained from it may serve to render subsequent minute historical study of some one form more fruitful in coördinated ideas and less apt to result in partial conceptions. The writer has reason to think that there is room for a book of this character even in these days of careful specialization.

The author’s thanks are due to Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin, and Co. for permission to print illustrative extracts from Mr. Lowell’s odes, and to Messrs. Charles Scribner’s Sons for similar courtesy in the case of passages from Sidney Lanier’s *Centennial Cantata*, and Miss Hapgood’s *Epic Songs of Russia*.

C. F. J.

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# FORMS OF ENGLISH POETRY

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## CHAPTER I

### THE FOOT, THE LINE, AND THE STANZA

THE worth of poetry depends on the fact that it gives pleasure to those who hear or read it. To give pleasure is the justification for the existence of any art, if we give to the term "pleasure" an extended signification. In the case of poetry the pleasure is very complex, as may be readily inferred from the truth that different kinds of versified language, different in subject-matter and form, please men of very distinct mental and emotional constitution, and in different stages of development. That the capacity of receiving some pleasure from poetry is almost universal may be gathered from the fact that in every age and in every condition of human society, poetic expression — sometimes, as it appears to us, quite rudimentary — has been cultivated, and frequently with great interest and fervor. Often we find the function of the poet regarded as of great importance. Ulysses says in the palace of Alcinous, "By all mortal men

bards are allotted honor and respect, because, indeed, the Muse has taught them songs and loves the tribe of singers."

The complex pleasure or congeries of pleasurable emotions of which poetry is the cause may be analyzed with great minuteness, because human susceptibilities cover a wide range. A rough basic classification would be : first, the physical pleasure we receive from a rudimentary form of music ; time-beats, echoes, and successive notes related to each other so as to form a melody ; in a word the pleasure received from sound without much regard to definite intellectual impressions. A child listens attentively to the recitation of a ballad, the words of which it comprehends very imperfectly, to which indeed it may attach erroneous conceptions. Some poetry is enjoyed by mature persons in the same way very much as music is. Notions of beauty and symmetry are dimly suggested, with little regard to the meaning of the words. Conscious thought is not appealed to, but the subconsciousness is vaguely but pleasurably stirred. The capacity for this element of pleasure is substantially universal. The child in the cradle is soothed by the crooning of a simple melody, the sailors are cheered by shouting in time some meaningless "chanty," the schoolboy declaims his Homer, and the student his Swinburne, without much thought of the sense or the syntax. The words are little more than sounds, though that

little may be of considerable importance. It is this element of the pleasure-giving power of poetry, akin as it is to music, which lifts the art out of the rank of cultivated diversions and puts it among the great motive forces of the world, from the operation of which no one is exempt. It may be radically based on the fact that the constitution of the material universe is harmonious atomic vibration.

X The second reason for the pleasure taken in poetry is that the words have significance. X Taken separately they have meaning, they symbolize things and abstractions; taken together they convey ideas, relations of things, reactions of the human mind on experiences; taken in combination with measure and melody their significance and power are wonderfully reënforced; they have the power of making us conceive things emotionally and vividly. No man ever reads poetry in a language he cannot understand, however melodious it may be. But those who read poetry in a language they do understand, even imperfectly, see the world and life in a new light, because they catch glimpses of them through the eyes of a poet. Unsuspected beauty in the flower or the landscape is revealed. They come in contact for the moment with an illuminated intellect. Honor and chastity and courage and love, all the virtues which they have been taught to respect as abstractions, are seen to be divine and to be active and permanent



forces in life. This emotional and spiritual widening of the intellectual outlook is a source of pleasure to the reader of true poetry, — a pleasure bound up with the other and inferior pleasure he receives from the regulated succession of melodious or sonorous sounds.

X A third pleasure we receive from poetry comes from the perception of artistic work. We admire any beautiful thing produced by a man not only because it is beautiful, but because it is a work of human skill. Sympathy with our kind causes us to take delight in the earliest and crudest attempts at artistic embodiment in which, indeed, patience and simple-minded devotion to the idea of beauty are sometimes strikingly evident. A very slight knowledge of technical art increases our admiration of its manifestations. Poetry has taken many forms, — the heroic epic, the popular ballad, the romance, the short lyric, the lament, and many others, each of which expresses a distinct phase of poetic development. In many cases they correspond more or less exactly to periods of social history. They are combined and again dissociated. A knowledge of some of these forms adds greatly to our appreciation of poetry. It would not constitute an understanding of the real nature of poetry, but only of the construction of verse and of the characteristic forms in which poetry has found expression. In this book a classification of the principal forms will be given and the discussion will be restricted to

those which have been used in English literature. No minute subclassifications will be attempted.

Admitting that the pleasure which a knowledge of technical forms of verse adds to the reading of poetry is of an inferior, possibly artificial, nature, there is no reason to suppose it incompatible with the more elevated pleasure derived from æsthetic appreciation. On the contrary, a general knowledge of construction results not in less love but in a more intelligent love of art. Criticism, it is true, is sometimes vitiated by exclusive attention to merely formal matters, but that is not because the writer has learned the artificial rules deduced from the practice of poets, but because he is blind to the vital qualities of verse which are the only justification for the rules. Those who naturally and unconsciously love poetry in some form — and they constitute the majority of the human race — will find their appreciation enhanced and clarified by some comprehension of poetic forms.

It is necessary first to define and discuss briefly the basic elements of verse — the foot, the line, and the stanza — before considering the larger unit, the poem.

### *The Foot*

In verse, speech is arranged in units of one or more syllables, which divide the time of utterance into equal parts. These speech-time units, called feet, are marked by the presence of an accented

syllable which serves to individualize them. The succession of nearly equal and nearly equidistant stresses or accents is the first element in the structure of the audible symmetry, called verse. Judging from the analogy of music, it seems highly probable that the time-beat of the accented syllables in a line of English poetry is exact. That is, that if in normal reading we strike twenty accents in a minute, each would be one twentieth of a minute apart — all would be equally spaced ; and if we should continue reading, we should strike twenty more accents in the next minute. There is, however, no physical proof of this, and it would seem probable that while the norm or ideal is absolutely equidistant time-beats, asymmetry or a divergence from and constant recurrence to the norm mark successive lines of verse. Again, since the line has meaning, rhetorical considerations require variations of rapidity of the time-beats corresponding to the emphasis laid on the sentiment. But undoubtedly at the foundation of the poetic structure lies the equal time-beat, however it may be modified by something higher than mere mechanical acoustic regularity. In fact, to mark all the accents equally in reading would be to scan the line, which would be bad art. But the stresses must be so arranged that the normal, equidistant temporal beat of the verse structure continually suggests itself. How absurd it would be to read the Shakespearean blank verse : —

To-mór — rów and — to-mór — rów and — to-mórow  
 Creeps in — this pét — ty pace — from dáy — to dáy  
 To the — last syl—lable of — recor — ded tíme,  
 And all — our yés — ter dáy — have ligh — ted fools  
 The wáy — to dus — ty deáth.

But the five accents are there, and make the lines verse. All good readers suggest the scansion in reading, some much more than others, and none ignore it entirely. Scanning is simply pronouncing the accents at isochronous intervals.

The foot marked by its accented time-beats falls under several heads distinguished by the number of syllables and the position of the accented syllable with reference to the others. These are still distinguished by the Greek names, which were based on the theory that quantity, or time occupied in pronouncing the vowel, not accent, marked the pronunciation units. Even now in reading poetry we sometimes drawl or prolong the accented syllables as well as stress them. We read :—

The splén — dor fálls — on cas — tle wálls  
 And snów — y sum — mits óld — in stó — ry,

and the unaided ear detects that the vowels in "snow," "old," and "sto" are lengthened. Should we prolong them unduly, we should fall into chanting; but should we read the lines with the ordinary conversational pronunciation, they would hardly be

recognized as poetry even if we had accurately stressed the accents. There is, therefore, some reason for continuing to use the terms iambus, trochee, dactyl, amphibrach, and anapest, although the accent is the dominating characteristic of English verse, and they referred to quantity. The terms are almost too well known to need definition, and we will confine ourselves to the statement that an iambus consists of an unaccented syllable followed by an accented one; a trochee the reverse; an amphibrach of an accented syllable between two unaccented syllables; an anapest of two unaccented syllables followed by an accented one; and a dactyl the reverse; and that an accented syllable followed by a pause sometimes fills out the time that a foot must occupy, though quantity is no longer the controlling criterion. The analogue of the spondee or foot consisting of two long syllables is very rare in the English language, being confined almost exclusively to hyphenated dissyllables both of which are accented, like "red-hot." But an iambus or a trochee is frequently used in imitations of classic meters to take the place of a spondee.

### *The Line, or Verse*

The line is a group of feet which belong together and are individualized in printing and in pronunciation. It should not consist of more than eight feet, and except in very rare instances does not terminate

in the middle of a word. In reading it is marked by a slight, almost imperceptible pause at the end, and by stressing the last accented syllable with a little more force than the preceding ones. Originally poetry was chanted or recited in a modified form of singing, not infrequently with a simple instrumental accompaniment. Coleridge and Wordsworth read their own blank verse in the chanting manner, and so did Tennyson, but the method is antiquated, and there is now only the faintest suggestion of chanting on a key different from that of ordinary conversation left in the reading of poetry. The line structure is marked more delicately, but it must still be marked distinctly. Otherwise the poem falls to pieces.

In nearly all modern poetry the ends of the lines are marked by rhyme, and the danger is that the lines become individualized too completely and their mutual interdependence be lost sight of by the too great emphasis on the rhyming syllables. In blank verse, on the contrary, the line structure may be lost when the grammatical pause does not fall at the end of the line, unless care is taken to emphasize the final accent delicately.

Terminal rhyme, or the echo between the sounds at the ends of two or more lines, sometimes successive, sometimes separated by intervening lines, is subject to certain arbitrary rules. It is neither identity nor mere similarity or assonance. The rules are: 1st. Perfect or exact rhymes must couple

the syllables on which the rhythmical accent falls. 2d. The vowel sounds of the rhyming syllables must be identical. 3d. The consonant sounds which precede the vowel sounds must be different, and those which follow or close it must be identical. Perfect rhymes, then, would be *roam* and *home*, *dove* and *love*, *June* and *tune*. Imperfect rhymes would be *June* and *moon*, *home* and *come*, *love* and *prove*. Where the rhyming accented syllables are followed by unaccented ones, the unaccented ones must be identical, like *idly* and *widely*, *people* and *steeple*, *charming* and *harming*, *morrow* and *sorrow* and *borrow*. These are called double or feminine rhymes. Triple rhymes, where the rhyming accented syllables are followed by identical pairs of unaccented syllables, like *tenderly* and *slenderly*, *futurity* and *purity*, are rare.

Terminal rhyme subject to these arbitrary rules is a comparatively modern invention. It is found in the Latin hymns of the church in the twelfth century, as :—

Dies iræ, dies illa,  
Solvat sæclum in favilla,  
Teste David cum Sybilla.

Tuba mirum spargens sonum,  
Per sepulcra regionum,  
Coget omnes ante thronum.

It has been conjectured that terminal rhyme was suggested by the usage of Moorish writers in Spain,

but it seems possible that so pleasing a device might have been hit upon independently in any language. Its use became general in the eleventh century in France, and in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in the composite English tongue as it assumed form. Dante, Petrarch, and Chaucer are all rhymers, and the use of the closing echo has characterized the verse of their tongues by poets ever since. Of course assonance, or the pleasing succession of similar sounds, is the essence of the formal structure of poetry as well as the measured time-beat, whether marked by quantity or by stress, as is readily seen in the lines of Homer. It is modern terminal rhyme of which we are speaking. Sporadic rhyme, dependent largely on the fact that similar grammatical forms have similar terminations, is not infrequent in Latin verse, as for instance in Horace's ode :—

*Phœbe, sylvarumque potens Diana,  
Lucidum cœli decus, O colendi,  
Semper et culti, . . .*

and it seems strange that poets did not even then consciously use words of similar sound to mark the divisions of their verbal structures. Possibly the use of quantity or the prolonged vowel sound was sufficient to give beauty to verse in the old pronunciation without any terminal rhyme echo. But the use of rhyme became almost universal when it was hit upon.



A question arises whether imperfect rhymes, in which the vowel sounds are similar but not identical, like *weather* and *hither*, mar the beauty of verse. The answer to this must depend theoretically on what is the real function of terminal rhyme, and practically on the usage of poets admitted to be masters of musical verse.

The function of terminal rhyme is twofold: first, to mark the lines and thereby to emphasize the structure of the poem as band courses emphasize the stories of a building. We thereby perceive more readily the interdependence of the parts and the unity of the whole. For this purpose it is evident that the rhymes need not be exact any more than the band courses need be exactly alike. The second function of the rhyme is to give the pleasure which comes from linked sounds or echoes. The lines might be individualized by pauses or stresses, but the echo individualizes by a device which is beautiful in itself. Now, an echo is never a perfect reproduction of the original sound. It recalls it in a modified form, and, therefore, adds variety to what otherwise would be mechanically regular. A stroke on the bass drum marks the time very perfectly, but its uniformity is irritating after a few repetitions. If the pleasure in reading poetry consisted only in a perception of painstaking workmanship and difficulties overcome, perfect rhymes would be indispensable. But the pleasure we take in poetry rarely rests on the con-

scious perception of technical skill, but usually on an unconscious perception of order like that of nature in which the rigid law of uniformity is modified by variations which suggest the law without following it slavishly, and give individuality to all the pines in the forest, yet mold them into a sylvan whole. In fact, the function of rhyme does not require that the assonances should all fill the requirements of the rules any more than it requires that they should all be on the same vowel, which, indeed, is, save in exceptional cases, considered a blemish. To bring within the range over which our memory for sounds extends two such rhyming pairs as *moans*, *groans*, and *stove*, *Jove*, gives an unpleasant effect from too frequent repetition of the sound of the open *o*.

The question must, however, be settled by the practice of poets, to whom is given the power of building musical word structures. This power, though largely increased by the reading — not by the study — of poetry, is instinctive and unaccountable. Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley, Keats, and Swinburne are admittedly masters of musical verse. From a page of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, out of one hundred and twenty lines we gather the following eleven imperfect pairs: *wear*, *year* — *imprinted*, *contented* — *one*, *gone* — *years*, *bears* — *fast*, *taste* — *kiss*, *is* — *drought*, *mouth* — *forage*, *courage* — *taste*, *last* — *quest*, *feast* — *heaven*, *even*. Milton is a far more careful workman, but in the

three hundred and twenty-five lines of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* we find the following pairs: *melancholy, holy — thee, Jollity — thee, Liberty — due, crew — blithe, scythe — end, fiend — verse, pierce — tie, harmony — strove, above — throne, contemplation — among, song — bear, insphere — tragedy, by — wont, hunt — breathe, underneath — ecstasies, eyes*, or sixteen imperfect pairs in three hundred and twenty-five lines, a slightly less proportion than in Shakespeare's poem. It might be urged that in the pronunciation of the time some of the above rhymed more perfectly than they do in our modern pronunciation. *Melancholy* might have had the long *o*. In the same poem, however, it rhymes to *folly*. But the rhymes are quite as agreeable in the modern pronunciation as if they were perfect.

In Shelley's *Skylark*, one hundred and five lines, we find twelve imperfect pairs: *spirit, near it — wert, heart — even, heaven — clear, there — cloud, overflowed — see, melody — thought, not — leaves, gives — grass, was — not, fraught — flow, now — thee, satiety — Hymeneal, be all*.

In the first two hundred and sixty lines of *The Eve of St. Agnes* we find sixteen imperfect couplets and triplets: *was, grass — man, wan — freeze, oratories — door, poor — cavalier, other where — moors, doors, hours — foul, soul — morn, crone — ears, bears — secrecy, privacy — last, chaste — device, eyes, heraldries — amethyst, prest — weed, bed —*

*moon*, thereon — clarion, tone, begone. In some of the above the rhyming vowels do not agree, in others one of the rhyming syllables is unaccented, and in a few the final consonants are unlike.

From this we may conclude that fourteen per cent of imperfect rhymes in no way impairs the musical effect of sustained verse. Mr. Sidney Lanier says in *Science of English Verse*: "The resources of the English tongue are such as to hold the poet always down to the rigid mark of perfection. If the rhyme is not perfect, if it demands the least allowance, throw it away. . . . The student may rest with confidence in the belief that no rhyme but a perfect rhyme is ever worth a poet's while."

That is the creed of most verse writers at present, and the pains taken in hunting the rhyme is one of the reasons why their verses have a mechanical effect and they are restricted to short poems. One of the most musical of the poems of the nineteenth century was Rossetti's *The Burden of Nineveh*. This is written in ten-line, four-accent stanzas, the first four rhyming, the next ending in the obscure *e* sound, the next four rhyming, and the tenth ending in the word *Nineveh*. It is full of imperfect rhymes necessitated by the four rhyming terminals. Possibly *Nineveh* can hardly be said to be even an imperfect rhyme to *destiny* and *history* and the eighteen others, but the repeated remote assonance is very beautiful, and a

large part of the acoustic beauty is lost by changing *Nineveh* to some other word — *Babylon*, for instance. This would go to show that a very remote echo at the end of a line may be very pleasant if the lines are not too near together. It is necessary to read aloud three or four stanzas at least to perceive that the fifth and tenth lines of the stanzas are connected:—

In our museum galleries  
To-day I lingered o'er the prize  
Dead Greece vouchsafes to living eyes —  
Her art forever in fresh wise

From hour to hour rejoicing me.  
Sighing, I turned at last to win  
Once more the London dirt and din,  
And as I made the swing door spin  
And issued, they were hoisting in  
A winged beast from Nineveh.

A human face the creature wore,  
And hoofs behind and hoofs before,  
And flanks with dark runes fretted o'er —  
'Twas bull, 'twas mitered Minotaur.

A dead disboweled mystery :  
The mummy of a buried faith  
Stark from the charnel without scathe ;  
Its wings stood for the light to bathe  
Such fossil cerements as might swathe  
The very corpse of Nineveh.

The print of its first rush wrapping,  
Wound ere it dried, still ribbed the thing :

What song did the brown maidens sing,  
 From purple mouths alternating,  
     When that was woven languidly?  
 What vows, what rites, what prayers preferred,  
 What songs has the strange image heard?  
 In what blind vigil stood interred  
 For ages, till an English word  
     Broke silence first, at Nineveh?

The extract is long enough to exemplify the imperfect rhymes, but not long enough to bring out the beauty of the composition.

Mr. Swinburne is confessedly one of the most musical of the modern poets, or of the poets of all ages. A stanza or two from his vigorous poem, *A Watch in the Night*, is enough to prove the truth of the statement:—

Watchman, what of the night?  
     "Storm and thunder and rain,  
     Lights that waver and wane,  
         Leaving the watch fires unlit,  
 Only the bale fires are bright,  
     And the flash of the lamps now and then  
         From a palace where spoilers sit,  
     Trampling the children of men."

\*        \*        \*        \*        \*

Italy, what of the night?  
     "Oh child, child, it is long;  
     Moonbeam and starbeam and song  
         Leave it dumb now and dark.

Yet I perceive on the height  
 Eastward — not now very far,  
 A song too loud for the lark,  
 A light too strong for a star."

All the stanzas of this noble poem are equally musical, and it does not contain an imperfect rhyme. Still, a comparison with the poems before mentioned will show that its music is of an inferior order. The alliteration is too insistent and the time-beat too emphatic for subtle effects. The others are more free, varied, and natural. This seems less spontaneous. It would be saying altogether too much to call it "machine-made," but the taint of artificiality hangs about it. Machine-made things are technically regular and perfect, and hand-made things are full of little imperfections of detail which give the charm of individuality. The alliteration is a little overdone, though nowhere so cacophonous as in the line: —

A mountain stream that ends in mud,  
 Methinks is melancholy,

an admirable figure spoiled in form by an inartistic vowel sequence.

Macaulay's *Battle of Ivry* is a spirited battle ode, and the rhymes are all unimpeachable, but they suggest intelligent labor rather than spontaneity. The rhymes fall with the uniformity of the strokes of the metronome, and the vowel sequences though vigorous are harsh, and show that the writer lacked

the instinctive appreciation of the "concord of sweet sounds" without which pains taken in perfecting form is labor thrown away.

The conclusion from examples is that absolutely perfect rhymes are not essential to the beauty of a poem, with the further suggested suspicion that energy may be so far spent in seeking them as to give the composition a stiff and formal character.<sup>1</sup>

### *Tone-color*

The combinations of feet into lines are, of course, numerous, and constitute the subject-matter of prosody, a science in which classification can be carried to great refinement. It is treated in many text-books. The word "meter" is used to signify a line, as in pentameter or hexameter, lines of five and six feet. It is also used for a specific combination of lines, as in the terms, "common meter," "long meter," or "Sapphic meter." The æsthetic quality of the line depends principally on the fact

<sup>1</sup> It is of course understood that rhymes which suggest a vicious pronunciation are to be avoided. Furthermore, the final consonant sounds in rhyming words should be identical, — it is the vowel sounds that need not be precisely the same. Thus to rhyme *main* and *name* is not allowable, nor can similar instances be found in the work of recognized poets since the sixteenth century. In the old English ballads, rhymes with this peculiar kind of imperfection were occasionally used, as, for instance: *gane, hame — hand, gang — home, on — dine, time — name, again — sin, swim — flame, again — wine, time — weep, fee — him, green*. Nearly all of them seem to be due to confusion between *m* and *n*, the sounds of which are not far apart.





that metrical feet have other acoustic relations than that of stresses equally placed in time. Each foot is made up of syllables in which the vowel sounds are musical notes, produced by a musical instrument, the human organ of speech. The combinations of these sounds in the line are harmonious if the order in which they follow accords with their acoustic relations to each other, — relations far more delicate than the exact vibratory equivalents of musical pitch, though based on the same physical law. The consonants, too, which open or close the vowel sounds of words vary greatly in musical quality and can be arranged in sequences which are pleasing or the reverse, the most obvious arrangement being alliteration or the linking together of words beginning with the same consonant. Internal alliteration or bringing together syllables of related consonant sounds is more delicate and artistic. It is these melodic sequences of sound which give the poetic line vigor, life, and indefinable significance, and to impart to it these qualities is the essence of artistry. As the notes in human speech are very numerous, each of our written vowels representing from three to nine sounds, the possible modulated combinations of ten syllables are countless even if restricted to those which have intelligible meaning. The poet is endowed with the power of instinctively selecting those which are melodious, and this power is an intimate quality of his nature. This skill is inborn and rare ;

there lies deep in the man a sympathy with melodious sound combinations, and his words assume them readily. To other men who have not the power of creating them they give almost as much pleasure as they do to him. If this power is united with intellectual ability and keen perception of the emotional suggestiveness of things, we have a poet of the higher rank.

The tone-color sense is like the color sense which constitutes the irreducible charm of some painters. It is a transcendental technic which cannot be brought within a set of scientific categories. We know that some words flow together and some do not. For instance, the name "phonetic syzygy" that has been invented for this poetic element is as cacophonous a combination as can be imagined, whereas the compound "tone-color" is in itself agreeable. The complicated music of a poetic phrase can be illustrated by few examples. As far as possible different vowel combinations have been selected and alliteration has been avoided : —

Good night, sweet prince ;  
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest,  
— SHAKESPEARE.

O delight of the headlands and beaches.  
— SWINBURNE.

Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars.  
— MARLOWE.

Thær com flowende, flod æfter ebban.

— BATTLE OF MALDON.

Envy and calumny and hate and pain. — SHELLEY.

Ah ! What a sound will rise, how wild and dreary.

— LONGFELLOW.

It will be observed that in most of the above lines there is one key word which if changed takes with it the beauty of the phrase. If in the first one, for instance, we substitute "spirits" for "angels," we lose the modulation between the first and second groups of vowels made by the successive *ng* sounds in "angels" and "sing." The following combinations have no music in them, though in all the accents are correctly arranged : —

The babe, she thought, would surely bring him back.

His crime complete, scarce knowing what he did.

Brief time had Conrad now to greet Gulnare.

She clasps a babe to whom her breast brings no relief.

— BYRON.

Give yourself no unnecessary pain,

My dear Sir Cardinal. — SHELLEY.

Wide smiling skies shine bright.

The melodic combinations of words should be continually varied, not to avoid monotony, though nothing is more tiresome than continual recurrence of similar cadences, but because they express emotion which rises and falls as different images

are presented to the mind. Even harsh collocations are sometimes emphatic and rhetorical and are effective in dramatic situations when passion is broken and inarticulate. But every feeling in the ordinary range of experience, every emotion which is related to the beauty and order and pathos of life, is reflected in some of the unobtrusive forms of verbal music, and we rank a poet as artist largely by his power to link words so that the sound suggests unformulated thought. Among the poets whose lines are marked by refined melodic assonances are Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Gray, Goldsmith, Coleridge, Shelley, Tennyson, Poe, Longfellow, and others of less note. The music of each is individual like the tones of the voice. All are musical, though they vary widely in emotional range and interpretative insight.

### *The Rhythm or Movement of the Line*

The sequence of stressed syllables or the rhythm of the line is another musical element hardly less important though less delicate than the "concourse of sweet sounds" of which we have spoken. The rhythm depends on the position and emphasis of the accented syllables and the number of unaccented syllables between them; that is to say, on the scansion of the line. This is usually to be detected by the opening and ending words, but it may sometimes be necessary to glance over two or three lines before we perceive the norm or con-

trolling scansion if it is at all novel or intricate. In ordinary blank verse or the heroic couplet the scheme discloses itself at a glance, but in meters where variety is allowed it is not so easy, and an "ear for verse" or considerable practice in reading verse is necessary to determine where the lines of division between the feet should be placed. Methodical scansion is fortunately not necessary to intelligent reading or enjoyment of verse, and usually a reader hits on the norm or general scheme instinctively. The prevailing foot gives the rhythmical movement of the line and influences its expressiveness. Coleridge was one of the first to notice that the number of accents and not the number of syllables was the important matter in English verse, and that lines composed of different feet correspond to different phases of emotion. In the introduction to *Christabel*, in which anapests, dactyls, and two-syllable feet are all used with an instinctive recognition of fitness, he says: —

"The 'meter' of the *Christabel* is not, properly speaking, irregular, though it may seem so from being founded on a new principle, namely that of counting in each line the accents, not the syllables. Though the latter may vary from seven to twelve, yet in each line the accents will be found to be only four. Nevertheless, the occasional variation in number of syllables is not introduced wantonly, but in correspondence with some transition in the nature of the imagery or passion."

There is not wind enough to twirl  
 The one red leaf, the last of its clan,  
 That dances as often as dance it can,  
 Hanging so light and hanging so high  
 On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

It has been said that the slow iambics in the first line suggest quiet night.

The second line is more drowsy. The spondee, "red leaf," makes the movement slow and halts the line. "Of its clan," anapest, however, imparts movement.

In the third line, the iambics and anapests give more liveliness.

The fourth line is more rapid still, and in the fifth the iambus and three anapests correspond to the idea of restless movement.

Mr. Yeats's poem, *The Lake Isle of Innisfall*, is as wonderful for subdued tone-color as for expressive rhythm:—

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfall,  
 And a small cabin build there of clay and wattles made ;  
 Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-  
   bee  
 And live alone in the bee-loud glade.  
 And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes  
   dropping slow,  
 Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the  
   cricket sings.  
 Then midnight's all a glimmer and noon a purple glow  
 And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day

I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore,  
While I stand on the roadway or on the pavements gray,  
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

Mr. Yeats's poem is a poetic embodiment of the homesickness of the exile or city dweller for his lonely birthplace, and the plaintive Celtic melancholy pervades it; but it is difficult to scan, and it is not improbable that if any one should construct the formula, the author would say nothing of the kind was in his mind. The beauty of the verse is almost as elusive as the form. Possibly there is a subtle connection between sentiment and embodiment which we cannot analyze. Possibly regular time-beats would not harmonize at all with the stifled sob in the speaker's heart. But the poem is at least an illustration of the connection between form and sentiment. The two accents on consecutive syllables in the middle of the verse, "gó nów" — "sóme péace" — build thér', and so forth, give the lines a slow movement wonderfully expressive of plaintive memories.

The general principles relating to the effect of the different feet are:—

1st. Iambics alone give dignity and weight to the movement. For example:—

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,  
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,  
The plowman homeward plods his weary way  
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Cardinal Newman's hymn is another instance of the dignity imparted by successive iambs:—

Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,  
                     Lead Thou me on.  
 The night is dark, and I am far from home —  
                     Lead Thou me on !  
 Keep Thou my feet ; I do not ask to see  
 The distant scene, — one step enough for me.

Some of the feet might be designated spondees as "Lead kind" — "Lead thou" — "am far," but the larger number are unmistakably iambs.

2d. Trochees tend to give an effect of tripping lightness, as will be readily seen from the following extracts from Keats's *Lines on the Mermaid Tavern*:—

Souls of poets dead and gone,  
 What elysium have ye known,  
 Happy field or mossy cavern,  
 Choicer than the Mermaid 'Tavern?  
 Have ye tippled drink more fine  
 Than mine host's Canary wine?  
 Or are fruits of Paradise  
 Sweeter than those dainty pies  
 Of venison ? O generous food !  
 Drest as though bold Robin Hood  
 Would with his maid Marian  
 Sup and bowse from horn and can.

3d. The three-syllable feet—dactyl, amphibrach, and anapest—also tend to give animation and



variety. As a rule they are used in combination with two-syllable feet and monosyllabic feet where the time is made equal by a pause after the accented syllable, which falls usually at the end of the line. Such monosyllabic feet occur in the extract from Keats given above. The three-syllable foot was used in popular poetry like the ballad from the earliest times, but was not much recognized in the poetry of culture till a later date. The Elizabethan Michael Drayton used three-syllable feet in his spirited ballad, *The Battle of Agincourt*:—

Fair stood the wind from France  
When we our sails advance,  
Nor now to prove our chance,  
Longer will tarry :  
But putting to the main,  
At Kaux the mouth of Seine,  
With all his martial train,  
Landed King Harry.

The three-syllable foot lends itself very naturally to poems of comedy. This may be seen in Goldsmith's *Retaliation*:—

Who born for the universe narrowed his mind  
And to party gave up what was meant for mankind,

and in the *Haunch of Venison*, conceived and expressed in the true comic spirit.

Hood's *Miss Kilmansegg* is another example of

the adaptability of the three-syllable foot, especially the anapest, to lively narration : —

Of "making a book," how he made a stir,  
But never had written a line to her,  
Once his idol and "Cara Sposa,"  
And how he had stormed and treated her ill  
Because she refused to go down to a mill  
She didn't know where, but remembered still  
That the miller's name was Mendoza.

How oft, instead of otto of rose,  
With vulgar smells he offended her nose,  
From gin, tobacco, and onion.  
And then, how wildly he used to stare,  
And shake his fist at nothing and swear,  
And pluck by the handful his shaggy hair,  
Till he looked like a study of Giant Despair  
For a new edition of Bunyan.

The three-syllable foot is, however, not always comic, as witness the solemnity of Hood's *Bridge of Sighs*, where the repeated dactyls and the final accented syllable lend themselves to the dirgelike effect called for by the situation : —

One more unfortunate,  
Weary of breath,  
Rashly importunate,  
Gone to her death.

This, however, is a "tour de force." Triple rhymes have usually a jingling character that is well exemplified in Gilbert's songs. The great master of the

music of the three-syllable foot is Swinburne, the first metrical artist of our day. The anapestic movement of the following is full of poetic energy :—

I would that with feet  
 Unsandalled, unshod,  
 Over-bold, over-fleet,  
 I had swum not nor trod  
 From Arcadia to Calydon northward,  
 A blast of the envy of God.

But the same measure renders a humorous theme very appropriately in Bret Harte's *Heathen Chinee* :—

It was August the third ;  
 And quite soft was the skies ;  
 Which it might be inferred  
 That Ah Sin was likewise,  
 Yet he played it that day upon William  
 And me in a way I despise.

It is worth noticing that the last syllable of the fifth line in the above stanzas is naturally transferred to the beginning of the sixth line to keep up the anapestic movement.

The general conclusions are that the prevailing foot gives the lilt or tune to the line ; and assonance or vowel sequence gives the melody.

Change of the typical foot used so as to give variety of movement in successive lines corresponding to changes in the thought expressed is illus-

trated by the extract given above from Coleridge's *Christabel*. To make a trochee take the place of an iambus, and *vice versa*, without ever giving the effect of a misplaced accent, is the mark of poetic power of the first rank — of poets like Milton, Shakespeare, and Coleridge.

In Milton's *L'Allegro* trochaic lines are largely preponderant, for the theme is the cheerfulness of the cultured man. Nevertheless, after the trochaic lines: —

Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee  
Jest and youthful jollity

down to, —

Come and trip it as you go  
On the light fantastic toe,

we find the iambic lines: —

And in thy right hand lead with thee  
The mountain nymph, sweet liberty.

In the same way the lines: —

Towered cities please us then  
And the busy hum of men,

are followed by: —

Where throngs of knights and barons bold  
In weeds of peace high triumphs hold.

The verse of our day is not marked by this free and varied music. Many passages of Shakespeare

could be cited where he passes from "grave to gay" with the same spontaneity and imparts to his words the same indefinable charm.

We see the lines can be indefinitely varied in structure and melodic effect. Lines rarely contain more than six accent beats. If they do contain more, they split themselves into two parts. The old septenarius or seven-accent verse of the "clerkly rhymers" in Latin of the twelfth century is supposed to be the original of the standard ballad measure; a four-accent line followed by a three-accent line. The eight-accent lines of Tennyson's *Locksley Hall* divide naturally in reading into two of four accents each:—

Comrades, leave me here a little,  
While as yet 'tis early morn.

The standard line for sustained poems in the English language has five beats or accents. With adjacent rhymes it constitutes heroic verse or the pentameter couplet. Normally it consists of ten syllables and therefore contains iambuses and trochees only, but occasionally the last foot has three syllables and is virtually an amphibrach. This last form was used by Shakespeare in his later plays and by his successors.

A good example of this eleven-syllable blank verse, is the speech of Cardinal Wolsey in *Henry VIII*, beginning:—

"Farewell, a long farewell to all my greatness,"

in which more than half the lines contain eleven syllables. The rhymed pentameter is exemplified by Chaucer in the prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, and in several of the tales themselves, by Pope in nearly everything he wrote, and by Dryden in much of his verse. It is conjectured that the five-accent verse owes its popularity to the fact that it is just about long enough for utterance in a single expiration of the breath. If this is true, the Greeks must have possessed more capacious lungs than we, as their standard line was the hexameter.

The next most popular line is the four-accent, eight-syllable. With adjacent rhymes it forms the octosyllabic couplet. The ease with which this is written has given rise to the expression, "the fatal facility of the octosyllabic." It was used by Chaucer or the unknown author of the *Romaunt of the Rose*, by Walter Scott in his longer poems, and by William Morris in several of the tales in *The Earthly Paradise*. It was derived by Chaucer from the meter of the French romances. Its "fatal facility" probably depends on the fact that it is about long enough for the ordinary grammatical clause to fit into it. Both of these couplets are apt to become monotonous unless the movement is varied by the use of trochees with the prevailing iambuses, and such variation can be accomplished only by a poet of refined ear. Burns's *Tam O'Shanter* is a good example of this

form, relieved occasionally by extra syllable endings making a feminine rhyme:—

But pleasures are like poppies spread,  
 You seize the flower, its bloom is shed;  
 Or like the snow-falls in the river,  
 A moment white then melts forever;  
 Or like the borealis race  
 That flit ere you can point their place;  
 Or like the rainbow's lovely form  
 Evanishing amid the storm.  
 Nae man can tether time or tide,  
 The hour approaches Tam maun ride,  
 That hour o' night's black arch the keystone,  
 That dreary hour he mounts his beast in.

### *The Stanza*

The next verse unit is the stanza or group of lines. It may vary in length from the triplet to the seventeen-line stanzas of Spenser's *Epithalamion*, the lengths and arrangement of the lines may be permuted, and the arrangement of the rhymes, whether double or single, may also be permuted. The combinations of all these elements give a great number of possible stanzaic forms even of the simpler varieties. Nearly every poet invents some new ones, and Mr. Swinburne's fertility in producing new measures is unrivaled. The number of stanzas ordinarily used is, however, limited. The couplet can hardly be called a stanza, though sometimes, as in Rossetti's *White*

*Ship*, printed in detached pairs, and therefore the triplet or group of three lines may properly be called the shortest stanza. Normally a period marks the termination of the stanza, and each is separated by a space. The form of printing, though of course it has nothing to do with poetic form, presents the scheme to the eye, and through visual perception the ear is enabled to apprehend the construction more readily.

Of three-line stanzas Tennyson's triplets in the *Two Voices* are noticeable. In them the three terminals of each stanza rhyme:—

“Consider well,” the voice replied,  
 “His face that two hours since hath died ;  
 Wilt thou find passion, pain, or pride?

“Will he obey when one commands?  
 Or answer should one press his hands?  
 He answers not nor understands.

“High up the vapors fold and swim ;  
 About him broods the twilight dim ;  
 The place he knew forgetteth him.”

Another form of triplets known as the “terza rima” used by the great poetic artist, Dante, is written in three-line stanzas with three alternate rhyming terminals. Consequently one of the rhymes in each stanza responds to two in the next, making the rhyme formula *aba-bcb-cdc-ded*, etc. This is the form used by Shelley in his *Ode to the*



*West Wind.* He, however, groups them into fourteen-line stanzas ending each with a couplet. This terza rima, though not very complicated, is very difficult to write, since the stanzas are neither entirely detached nor closely connected.

The elements of variation make quatrains or four-line stanzas so numerous as to defy classification. Among the better known are ballad measure or the "common meter" of our hymnal, — lines of four accents and three accents alternately, the four-accent being the first and third of each stanza, and the rhyme being usually confined to the second and fourth terminals. The movement is usually iambic, some variety being obtained by the occasional use of double rhymes.

The *Ballad of Chevy Chase*, quoted here in a modernized version, is an example:—

God prosper long our noble king, ♀  
 Our lives and safeties all;  
 A woeful hunting once there did  
 On Chevy Chase befall.

The stout earl of Northumberland  
 A vow to God did make  
 His pleasure in the Scottish woods  
 Three summer's days to take.

Cowper's comic ballad, *John Gilpin's Ride*, is in the same meter. It has a popular, homely character, and is one of the easiest of all meters to write.

Tennyson's quatrain in *In Memoriam* consists of octosyllabic lines, the first rhyming to the fourth, and the second to the third. The echoing pair inclosed in another rhyming pair gives a beautiful effect, dignified and musical without monotony. Fitzgerald's quatrain used in his renderings of the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, in which lines one, two, and four rhyme, and the third is independent, is well adapted to brief sententious expression. Stanzas of five lines and more are very numerous. We will refer to a few of them which have historic interest or are associated with the names of certain poets. Burns wrote many of his best known and wittiest verses in a meter that he made peculiarly his own, consisting of three four-accent iambic lines, then a two-accent line, another four-accent line, and a closing two-accent line, the four-accent lines all rhyming and the two short lines rhyming together:—

Had I to guid advice but harkit,  
 I might by this hae led a market,  
 Or strutted in a bank and clarkit  
     My cash account.  
 While here, half-mad, half-fed, half-sarkit,  
     Is a' th' amount.

I saw thy pulse's maddening play  
 Wild send thee pleasure's devious way,  
 Misled by fancy's meteor ray,  
     By passion driven ;

But yet the light that led astray  
Was light from heaven.

The great metrical artist, Chaucer, adapted from Italian and French forms the seven-line stanza which he used in *Troilus and Criseyde*, in which the rhymes run *a-b-a-b-b-c-c*, a very beautiful form, as is evident from the following extract: —

Criseyde was this lady name aright ;  
As to my dome in al Troyes citee  
Nas noon so fair, for, passing every wight  
So aungellyk, was her natyf beautee,  
That lyk a thing inmortal semed she,  
As doth an hevenish parfit creature  
That doun were sent in scorning of nature.

Tasso used the "ottava rima" in *Jerusalem Delivered*, and Fairfax the Englishman translated it in the same meter in the seventeenth century. (The rhyme scheme here is *a-b-a-b-a-b-c-c*. Byron used it in *Don Juan*, the *Vision of Judgment*, and several other poems, writing over eighteen thousand verses in this difficult form — difficult because each stanza requires two pairs of triple rhymes, a feat sufficient to establish his reputation as a technical artist. He uses many ingenious and unexpected double rhymes which give an air of whimsicality to the lighter passages.

Sweet is a legacy, and passing sweet  
The unexpected death of some old lady

Or gentleman of seventy years complete  
 Who's made us youth wait too, too long already  
 For an estate, or cash, or country seat,  
 Still holding out with stamina so steady,  
 That all the Israelities are fit to mob its  
 Next owner for their double damned post-obits.

In his *Monk's Tale* Chaucer used an eight-line stanza with one less rhyme on the first terminal and one more on the second, the scheme being represented by *a-b-a-b-b-c-b-c*, which would seem to be a sufficiently difficult structure. All these are in the five-accent pentameter line, but Spenser added to the last an Alexandrine rhyming on *c*, making the famous Spenserian stanza of nine lines. The closing line has great influence on the musical expression, giving it a stately, dignified, brocaded effect. Spenser wrote the *Faerie Queene* in this stanza, an enterprise calling for a vast fund of poetic energy even in its unfinished condition. Thomson's *Castle of Indolence* is in Spenserians. Shelley used it in *The Revolt of Islam* and in his lofty elegy, the *Adonais*, to the memory of John Keats. He calls it a measure inexpressibly beautiful, and says he "was enticed by the brilliancy and magnificence of sound which a mind that has been nourished upon musical thoughts can produce by a just and harmonious arrangement of the pauses of this measure." Keats's *Eve of St. Agnes* well illustrates the dignified harmony of which the Spenserian is capable. In *Childe Harold* Byron

worked into it phrases of great power and rhetorical magnificence. It seems best adapted to express the spirit of an age of romance or at least of an age when the aroma of chivalry still lingered in the air and before the critical feeling of distrust had chilled generous enthusiasms. Tennyson used it with beautiful effect in a few stanzas in the opening of *The Lotus Eaters*, and as he did not continue to use it, it may safely be assumed that no one will write an extended poem in the Spenserian stanza hereafter. The stately architecture of the past can be reproduced, but its great poetic structures cannot. The examples which follow illustrate its "linked sweetness" and structural decorative character : —

A litle lowly Hermitage it was,  
 Downe in a dale, hard by a forest's side,  
 Far from resort of people that did pas  
 In traveill to and froe : a litle wyde  
 There was an holy chappell edifyde  
 Wherein the Hermite dewly wont to say  
 His holy thinges each morne and eventyde ;  
 Thereby a christall streame did gently play,  
 Which from a sacred fountaine welled forth alway.  
 — SPENSER, *Faerie Queene*.

He hath outsoared the shadow of our night ;  
 Envy and calumny and hate and pain,  
 And that unrest which men miscall delight  
 Can touch him not and torture not again ;  
 From the contagion of the world's slow stain

He is secure, and now can never mourn  
 A heart grown cold, a head grown gray in vain,  
 Nor when the spirit's self hath ceased to burn,  
 With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

— SHELLEY, *Adonais*.

St. Agnes' eve — Ah, bitter chill it was ;  
 The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold,  
 The hare limped trembling through the frozen grass,  
 And silent was the flock in woolly fold,  
 Numb were the beadsman's fingers while he told  
 His rosary, and while his frosted breath,  
 Like pious incense from a censer old,  
 Seemed taking flight for heaven without a death,  
 Past the sweet virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith.

— KEATS, *Eve of St. Agnes*.

The Niobe of nations ! there she stands  
 Childless and crownless, in her voiceless woe ;  
 An empty urn within her withered hands,  
 Whose holy dust was scattered long ago ;  
 The Scipios' tomb contains no ashes now,  
 The very sepulchres lie tenantless  
 Of their heroic dwellers ; dost thou flow,  
 Old Tiber, through a marble wilderness ?  
 Rise with thy yellow waves and mantle her distress.

— BYRON, *Childe Harold*.

"Courage," he said, and pointed toward the land,  
 "This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon."  
 In the afternoon they came unto a land  
 In which it seemed always afternoon,  
 All round the coast the languid air did swoon,

Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.

Full-faced above the valley stood the moon,  
And like a downward smoke, the slender stream  
Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

— TENNYSON, *The Lotus Eaters*.

These extended examples are given because the Spenserian is our most important ancestral stanzaic form. Its day is evidently past. If no deeper reason militated against its use, the modern requirement of perfect rhymes would exclude it. In it are embodied some of the great poetic achievements of the past.

### *Poetic Syntax*

Since English poetry is written in sentences, though with considerable freedom from the ordinary limitations of prose syntax, the relation of the grammatical structure is a matter of no small importance. The meaning determines the rhetorical emphases and pauses, and it is necessary that these emphases should strengthen the metrical accents and the pauses help fill up the intervals between the time-beats. If the grammatical phrase or clause terminates with the line, one kind of effect is produced ; if, on the contrary, these terminations are placed in the middle of the line, another kind of effect is produced. The art of the poet is as evident in the manner he superinduces his grammatical units on his metrical units as in his arrange-

ment of vowel sounds. The two different methods mentioned above are best illustrated in the handling of the pentameter line, and the extreme and striking illustrations of each one are to be found in the verse of Pope and Keats. Pope's method is to make each line a clause, and in many cases each couplet a sentence independent and detachable. The method of Keats was to make the clause terminate within the line, so that the meter and the grammatical emphasis are like two curves of vibration of different frequency in the same string, producing nodes and overtones. The combination may give a harmony of a higher order than either unaided can. The two methods are called the end-stopt and the mid-stopt or overflow.

Achilles' wrath, to Greece the direful spring,  
Of woes unnumbered, heavenly goddess sing;  
That wrath which hurled to Pluto's gloomy reign  
The souls of mighty chiefs untimely slain;  
Whose limbs unburied on the naked shore  
Devouring dogs and hungry vultures tore.  
Since great Achilles and Atrides strove,  
Such was the sovereign doom and such the will of Jove.

— POPE, Translation of the *Iliad*.

A thing of beauty is a joy forever:  
Its loveliness increases; it will never  
Pass into nothingness, but still will keep  
A bower quiet for us and a sleep  
Full of sweet dreams and health and quiet breathing;  
Therefore on every morrow are we wreathing

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A flowery band to bind us to the earth,  
 Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth  
 Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,  
 Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways  
 Made for our searching. Yes, in spite of all  
 Some shape of beauty moves away the pall  
 From our dark spirits.

— KEATS, *Endymion*.

In the first thirty-five couplets of Pope's *Iliad* all but six contain a line ending with the verb. In *Endymion* an equal number of couplets have the verb ending in thirteen only. In *Endymion* about one half of the lines end with a mark of punctuation, in Pope's translation about nine tenths. The difference of movement depends in part on the greater regularity of the accents in the extract from Pope, who adheres strictly to the iambic beat, while Keats uses trochees with great freedom. But the difference in the relation of the grammatical phrasing to the line or metrical phrasing is evident. The difference in effect is so palpable that it is difficult to realize that the two poems are written in the same form.

The distinction between overflow and end-stopt is marked in blank verse. It constitutes the difference between Shakespeare's earlier manner as seen in *Love's Labor's Lost*, and his later manner exemplified in *Cymbeline*. Milton's blank verse is in the overflow manner and influenced his successors, Wordsworth and Tennyson. The distinction is not

entirely confined to the pentameter, rhymed and unrhymed, but runs through all meters. In the rhymed pentameter the end-stopt manner is evidently monotonous and tends to bring the metrical framework too much into evidence, and to restrict the expressiveness of the verse to intellectual presentation. Such presentation becomes commonplace in a few years, but the suggestiveness of a musical embodiment is interpreted anew by each generation. Pope lives by reason of a few witty and pithy couplets; Shakespeare through whole passages and poems into which we read a different meaning from that which appealed to his contemporaries. In opposition to this it must be confessed that Homer's hexameters are far more frequently end-stopt than are those of Virgil, and yet the Greek poem is more musical than the Latin one is. In this case the inferiority of the end-stopt method is overbalanced by the superior musical quality of the Greek tongue. Nor does Homer use the end-stopt manner to excess, about every fourth line overflowing into the next one.

It is only the great excess of end-stopt lines that detracts from the expressiveness of verse, nor must it be supposed that their use is restricted to the pentameter. In short lyrics the metrical and grammatical phrases are usually conterminous! Short terminal lines in a stanza almost universally constitute a phrase. In Longfellow's *Skeleton in Armor* nearly every line is a phrase if not a clause :

Speak, speak, thou fearful guest,  
 Who with thy hollow breast,  
 Still in rude armor drest,  
     Comest to daunt me !  
 Wrapt not in Eastern balms,  
 But with thy fleshless palms,  
 Stretched as if asking alms,  
     Why dost thou haunt me ?

In the above the emphasis of the rhyme and of the syntax almost invariably fall on the same word. The same thing may be said of the lines of Burns, especially of the four-syllable lines of his stanza, like: "Thy slender stem," "Thou bonnie gem," "With speckled beast," "The purpling east," "Amid the storm," "Thy tender form," etc. The same may be said, too, of the short lines in Holmes's *Last Leaf* and of many other lyrical poems. We must conclude that the painful iteration of the *Dunciad* depends upon the fact that Pope so frequently makes the couplet a complete statement and adheres so closely to the iambic beat, and not to the fact that the rhyme is so frequently on an emphatic word. There being no structural intricacy in the heroic couplet, as there is in the Spenserian, for instance, variety must be sought by overlaying the grammar with the rhythm. Variety is of no value except as the form corresponds to the thought. Keats stigmatized the couplets of the imitators of Pope as "swaying about upon a rocking-horse" and says that they

Were closely wed  
To musty laws lined out with wretched rule  
And compass vile.

Coleridge and Wordsworth led the revolt against the decasyllabic couplet used in the old manner, and Shelley and Keats kept it up. It was a revolt, however, as much against the spirit as against the method of the eighteenth century, for manner and significance are closely connected. Chaucer, who first used the decasyllabic couplet in our language, combines end-stopt and overflow lines into a flowing narrative unequaled by any successor:—

Whan that Aprille with his shoures sote  
The droghte of March hath perced to the rote  
And bathed every veyne in swich licour  
Of which vertue engendred is the flour.

The very breath of the spring is in the movement of the verse. Browning uses the pentameter with great freedom, but disregards the couplet formation entirely, and his emphatic syntax minimizes the metrical effect:—

The woods were long austere with snow ; at last  
Pink leaflets budded on the beech, and fast  
Larches, scattered through pine-tree solitudes,  
Brightened, as in the slumbrous heart o' the woods  
Our buried year, a witch, grew young again  
To placid incantations, and that stain  
About were from her cauldron, green smoke blent

With these black pines — So Eglamor gave vent  
To a chance fancy. — BROWNING, *Sordello*.

Running down a page of *Sordello* of forty-three lines, twenty-four have no mark of punctuation at the end, and only one ends with a period.

In the hands of a master the overflow rhymed pentameter is well fitted to familiar verse when the poet passes from fancy to fancy without design or effort. Shelley writes: —

Upon the table

More knacks and quips there be than I am able  
To catalogize in this verse of mine,  
A pretty bowl of wood — not full of wine  
But quicksilver; that dew which the gnomes drink  
When at their subterranean toil they swink,  
Pledging the demons of the Earthquake, who  
Reply to them in lava — cry Halloo!  
And call out to the cities o'er their head —  
Roofs, towers, and shrines, the dying and the dead  
Crash through the chinks of earth — and then all quaff,  
Another rouse, and hold their sides, and laugh.

— SHELLEY, *Letter to Maria Gisborne*.

*Julian and Maddalo* is also written in the overflow manner which distinguished Shelley and Keats.

### *Irregular Meters*

Some verse is written with no obedience to any rhyming or stanzaic formula. The lengths of the lines and the position of the rhymes vary appar-

ently at random. We say apparently, for no work of art is produced at random. If it is not built on some plan that can be definitely expressed, it follows a law of which the poet is unconscious; the short lines, the long lines, the masculine and feminine rhymes have taken their places in accordance with the feeling to be expressed, and under the compulsion of the creative genius of the writer, otherwise they are inorganic and have no more beauty than a stone heap has. A heap of jewels, it is true, has beauty, but it is the beauty of the jewels and not of the heap. Fine lines will go far toward making a poem beautiful, but after all, they should be fine lines in their proper places, and the place for a certain line may be fixed by stanzaic formula or it may be fixed by artistic propriety. A predetermined scheme of rhyme succession is not an absolute necessity to the production of a beautiful poem, as is seen in Milton's *Lycidas*, Wordsworth's ode on *Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*, and many other "irregular" odes. Lowell's great *Commemoration Ode* changes in structure, following the form most expressive of the feeling as the theme is developed. The opening lines of *Lycidas* are:—

Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more,  
 Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,  
 I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,  
 And with forced fingers rude  
 Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year;

Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear  
 Compels me to disturb your season due ;  
 For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime ;  
 Young Lycidas ; and has not left his peer ;  
 Who would not sing for Lycidas? He knew  
 Himself to sing and build the lofty rhyme.  
 He must not float upon his watery bier  
 Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,  
 Without the meed of some melodious tear.

The lines have five accents with the exception of the fourth. In the next paragraph there are two short lines, and in the entire poem fourteen, thrown in at irregular intervals, sometimes as in the case of the line, "The glowing violet," giving a beautiful effect. The rhyme in the opening runs, *a-b-c-c-b-b-d-e-b-d-e-b-f-b*, in which no order can be found only the general idea of binding the whole by the rhymes on *b*: "Sear, year, dear, peer, bier, tear." The last eight lines of the poem follow the rhyme law of the "ottava rima." Nowhere else is the rhyme repeated so often as it is in the opening invocation. The irregular features of the poem are similar to the Italian "canzone."

Wordsworth's ode on *Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* is in eleven stanzas, varying in length from eight to thirty-nine lines, each of which treats a subdivision of the main theme. Of the two hundred and three lines, nearly one half are iambic pentameters. The others vary from six-accent to two-accent lines, thirty-nine being

four-accent lines. The rhymes come in such order as pleases the poet. There is no stanzaic law, but the entire poem is far from lawless. The parts cohere into an organic whole which is one of the strongest muniments to Wordsworth's title of poet. The second stanza will illustrate the free meter of the ode : —

The Rainbow comes and goes,  
And lovely is the rose,  
The moon doth with delight  
Look round her when the heavens are bare ;  
Waters on a starry night  
Are beautiful and fair,  
The sunshine is a glorious birth ;  
But yet I know where'er I go  
That there hath passed away a glory from the earth.

The successful use of irregular meter demands great poetic energy and the possession of some fine ideas. The effect in Southey's *Thalaba*, written in loose iambs, is exceedingly tame, and so are many of the Pindaric odes of the seventeenth century. We see that though poetry at the bottom is a regular acoustic structure, it admits in all its parts irregularities not simply for the sake of variety and breaking up monotony, but because they are expressive. The feeling varies and the form with it in true harmony. The deviations from the rule, metrical or stanzaic, are dictated by the artistic sense and are justified by their effect. The same principle holds in all arts and in nature itself, which pro-



duces no absolutely symmetrical trees or mountains. Modulated variety on a basis of uniformity is the secret of beauty in music, architecture, and poetry. Lawless variety is not expressive of anything but a wealth of material. The artist has the power to combine strains of sound so as to be infinitely suggestive of thought — thought of which very likely he was not himself conscious. We can only point out a few of the elements which he does combine to make an *Il Penseroso* or an ode on *Intimations of Immortality*. We recognize the product as something germane to the spirit of man, whether or not it is regular in form and conforms to laws critics have deduced or invented. It may follow precedent or it may not. Possibly the spirit of an age may demand a new form for the expression of thought moods that are peculiar to it. But the new form is only a combination of the old elements, emphasizing some and minimizing others according to the poet's peculiar powers. He may even neglect the underlying element, the metrical accent beat, as Whitman did, and produce something that will appeal to a few by virtue of the presence of other elements. The regular metrical beat alone is ineffectual because it may be mechanical. Vowel assonance or tone-color alone is tiresome, and stanzaic form alone would be valueless. It is the individual combination, different perhaps for each singer, that is expressive of a certain mood, of a certain attitude toward the world,

which could be exactly embodied in no other form.

The poem as a whole falls under one of a number of different heads distinguished by tenor and scope, as the epic, the ballad, the ode ; or by form, as the sonnet and the ballade. A full examination of any of these would involve a study of comparative literature and of literary history. In the following chapters brief definitions and a few illustrations will give a general idea of the meanings and limitations of these words. What has been said will give the student some idea of the many elements that are combined to make a poem, and of the complicated and difficult nature of the art of verse even on its technical side.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BALLAD

THE word "ballad" is derived from the root *bal*, meaning to dance, which is also seen in the words "ballet" and "ball." The derivation takes us back to a time when the public singing or recitation of verse was accompanied by rhythmical movements of the body, but it does not throw any light on the modern meaning of the word nor upon the origin or history of the early English ballad. Dancing in the form of processional maneuvers or graceful movements of the limbs was a part of ancient worship and of the expression of grief or exultation. David "danced and sang before the Lord." The Greek processional ode was accompanied with rhythmical movements of the singers. Our own Indians have their ghost dances, their snake dances, and the like, in which howling and jumping and gesticulation have about equal parts. The negroes of the South sway the body from side to side and stamp in accurate time when singing hymns. A survival of this original habit is seen in the games of children when they sing *Round the Mulberry Tree* and the like. Possibly the expression "gave him a song and

(dance" refers remotely to this original habit. No more than thirty years ago it was possible to hear in parts of this country a ballad sung with a dance or "walk around" by the singer at the end of each stanza. So the derivation of the word "ballad" rests on a deep-rooted sympathy between means of rhythmical expression, but does not prove the antiquity of the present form, since the dirge and the triumphal war song, as well as the popular song, were also originally accompanied by dancing. Still, it is evidence that the ballad was always a folk song and not a literary form, although the original ballad may be as different from a ballad of the fifteenth century as *Lead, Kindly Light* is from the original tribal lament for a dead warrior chief. Again, the French form, "ballade," has the same derivation, but is entirely unlike a folk song, being extremely artificial and finished in character. We take the connection between "ball," "ballet," and "ballad" as an interesting bit of the "fossil history" embedded in words, but without much evidential value as to the nature of the ballad composed in the English language.

The most general definition of a ballad is that it is a short narrative poem in a simple meter, told in an unaffected, unornamented manner, with very little expression of subjective emotion. It is lyrical in the sense that it is fitted to be recited to a simple, monotonous musical accompaniment, but there is very little lyricism or rapturous, excited

feeling in it. Professor Child, it is true, includes in his great collection, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, some metrical riddles which are not narratives, but as a rule the word is restricted to narrative poems. Riddles, the answer to which gains a reward if correct, or involves the payment of a forfeit if incorrect, are, however, found in all ancient popular literature, and if in the form of a song, may, without undue stretching of the definition, be called ballads. Riddle ballads are comparatively modern in the form we have them, as they are on broadsides or printed sheets belonging to the seventeenth century. The following example has the ballad manner:—

“If thou canst answer me questions three,  
This very day will I marry thee.”

“Kind sir, in love, O then,” quoth she,  
“Tell me what your three questions be.”

“O what is longer than the way,  
Or what is deeper than the sea?

“Or what is louder than the horn,  
Or what is sharper than the thorn?

“Or what is greener than the grass,  
Or what is worse than a woman was?”

“O love is longer than the way,  
And hell is deeper than the sea.

“And thunder’s louder than the horn,  
And hunger’s sharper than the thorn.

“And poison’s greener than the grass,  
And the devil’s worse than woman was.”

When she these questions answered had,  
The knight became exceeding glad.

And having truly tried her wit,  
He much commended her for it.

And after, as it’s verified,  
He made of her his lovely bride.

So now, fair maidens all, adieu,  
This song I dedicate to you.

I wish that you may constant prove  
Unto the man that you do love.

*King John and the Abbot* contains a less primitive humor than the above. It also fulfills the requisite of embodying a narrative. King John hearing that the abbot of Canterbury “kept a far better house” than the king could afford, propounds three questions which the abbot must answer in three weeks or lose his head. The abbot goes to Cambridge and Oxford, but none of the learned doctors can suggest proper answers. Returning home, he meets his shepherd, who, as he resembles his master, undertakes to go before the king “with crozier, and mitre, and rochet, and

cope" and answer the questions. The king puts the questions to him:—

"First, when thou seest me here in this stead,  
With my crown of gold so fair on my head,  
Among all my liege men so noble of birth,  
Tell me to one penny what I am worth."

The supposed abbot answers:—

"For thirty pence our Saviour was sold  
Among the false Jews as I have been told,  
And twenty and nine is the worth of thee,  
For I think thou art one penny worser than he."

The King he laughed and swore by St. Bittell —  
"I did not think I had been worth so little.  
Now, secondly tell me without any doubt,  
How soon I may ride this whole world about."

"You must rise with the sun and ride with the same,  
Until the next morning he riseth again,  
And then your Grace need not make any doubt  
But in twenty-four hours you'll ride it about."

The King he laughed and he swore by St. Jone —  
"I did not think it could be gone so soon.  
Now from the third question thou must not shrink  
But tell me here truly what I do think."

"Yea, that shall I do and make your Grace merry ;  
You think I'm the Abbot of Canterbury,  
But I'm his poor Shepherd as plain you may see  
That am come to beg pardon for him and for me."

The King he laughed and swore by the mass,  
 "I'll make thee lord Abbot this day in his place."

"Now, nay! my liege, be not in such speed.  
 For alack! I can neither write nor read."

"Four nobles a week then I will give thee  
 For this merry jest thou hast shown unto me.  
 And tell the old Abbot when thou comest home  
 Thou hast brought him a pardon from good King John."

True ballads, however, are more of a story than the above and show no evidence of an attempt to be witty. They are for the most part written in ballad meter, stanzas of four lines, the first and third of four accents and the second and fourth of three accents, the second and fourth lines rhyming, and rhyming frequently on the e sound. As an example take the opening stanzas of *Robin Hood and the Monk*:—

In' summer when the shawes be sheen,  
 And leaves be large and long,  
 It is full merry in fair forest  
 To hear the fowles' song.

To see the deer draw to the dale  
 And leave the hilles hie,  
 And shadow them in the leaves green  
 Under the green-wood tree.

It is conjectured that this form arose from the use of a seven-accent rhyming verse in Latin called the "septenarius" used as early as the twelfth century. The often-quoted quatrain:—

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Meum est propositum  
In taberna mori,  
Et vinum appositum  
Sitienti ori,

is made up of lines of four and three accents, but hardly seems like the model of the ballad measure. The French romances introduced into England by the Normans were usually in couplets. They were translated into English in stanzas of various lengths. How far the ballad measure resulted from a breaking down and simplification of the literary form of the French romances in becoming the metrical romances of England, or whether the ballad measure is a popular indigenous production, can hardly be determined. The interaction between cultivated literature and popular literature is obscure because popular literature in its earliest stages is not preserved, since as a rule it is transmitted by memory and changes as the language changes. The old English ballads as we have them do not date from earlier than the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries. But ballads existed among the people and were sung either by professional or semi-professional minstrels at gatherings or in households in the time of Chaucer, for he introduces a mock-heroic ballad at which the marshal of the party scoffs. The *Ryme of Sir Thopas* is told by Chaucer himself, who is represented as one of the party. The Host says to him: —

"Sey now somewhat sin other folk han sayd,  
Tell us a tale of mirthe and that anoon.  
Hoste quod I ne beth nat yvel apayd,  
For other tale certes can I noon  
But of a ryme I lerned long agoon."

He begins, —

"Listeth Lordes in good entent,  
And I wol telle verrayment  
Of mirthe and of solas ;  
Al of a knyght was fair and gent  
In bataille and in tourneyment  
His name was Sir Thopas."

So he runs on in ballad measure for some two hundred lines, exaggerating a ballad motif; the quest for the love of the fairie queene. He refers to the metrical romances in ballad form : —

"Men speke of romances of prys,  
Of Horn Child and of Ypotys  
Of Bevis and Sir Guy,  
Of Sir Libeux and Pleyndamour,  
But Sir Thopas he bereth the flour  
Of royal chivalry."

Harry Bailey then interrupts him and begs him to relate something in prose if that is the best he can do in rhyme : —

"No more of this for Goddes dignitee "  
Quod oure hoste, "for thou makest me

So wery of thy verray lewddnesse,<sup>1</sup>  
 That also wisly God my soule blesse,  
 Myn eres aken of thy drasty<sup>2</sup> speche,  
 Now swiche a rym the devel I biteche,  
 This may well be rym dogerel," quod he.

Chaucer then relates the prose tale of Melibœus, which is certainly "drasty" enough. This episode shows that in the latter part of the fourteenth century ballads were considered unliterary and unworthy of a poet of Chaucer's powers. The difference between literary literature and popular literature is in the tone and manner, for both handle the same material. Chaucer tells the tale of *Hugh of Lincoln* and there are several ballads on the same story. Literary literature is conscious of its dignity as art, it respects the literary traditions, it bears the burden of a moral, it is written largely for the educated and the powerful; in the Middle Ages it was an expression of the sentiments of chivalry. Chaucer was a man of wide human sympathies, but he is a man of books. He wrote at the end of *Troilus and Criseyde*:—

Go litel book, go litel myn tragedie,  
 Ther<sup>3</sup> God, thy maker, er that he dye  
 So sende might to make in som comedie;  
 But litel book, no maken thou n'envye,

<sup>1</sup> *Lewddnesse*, ignorance, unculture.

<sup>2</sup> *Drasty*, worthless, empty.

<sup>3</sup> *Ther*, would that.

But subgit be to alle poesye :  
And kis the steppes whereas thou seest pace  
Virgile, Ovyde, Omer, Lucan and Stace.<sup>1</sup>

Nothing of this kind intrudes into popular literature. The balladist is intent on his story and his audience and brings in no personal reflections.

Ballads continued to be regarded as hardly worth noticing till the early part of the nineteenth century. Sir Philip Sidney expresses his wonder that he likes the ballad of Percy and Douglas (the Battle of Otterbourne, probably) in the often quoted passage from the *Defence of Poesie* (1581):—

“Certainly I must confess my own barbarousness, I never heard the olde song of Percy and Douglas that I found not my heart moved more than with a Trumpet: and yet it is sung but by some blinde Crouder, with no rougher voice than rude stile, which being so evill apparelled in the dust and cobwebbs of that uncivil age, what would it worke trymmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindar?”

Before the introduction of the art of printing, after which we may assume that the ability to read became more general, ballads were transmitted orally and were of course subject to more or less change in transmission. It was necessary that they should be pleasing to an ordinary audience, and each repetition may be regarded in a sense as

<sup>1</sup> *Stace*, Statius.

an editing. There is a tendency, however, to repeat poetry exactly as it is learned even if it is not understood, and this would operate to prevent change. As the language developed, obsolete words, or at least obsolete pronunciations, would be dropped. The conflict between these two tendencies, one toward conservatism and one toward innovation, has resulted in many variants of the older ballads. No doubt, too, the reciter would drop many stanzas from time to time and insert others of his own invention to please his audience. We may readily conceive a popular entertainer, professional or semi-professional, getting up his own version of a ballad learned from some older person. Hence an old English ballad is not only popular poetry in form, but it is popular poetry in the sense that it has been molded by popular sentiment after its first composition. No author's name is attached to the old ballads. Naturally, this must be the case with a song published orally and subject to a sort of evolution in transmission.

In the sixteenth century, after the art of printing was well introduced, popular ballads were printed on a sheet of paper called a broadside and sold in many cases by the person who sang them in the streets or at fairs. This is the kind of ballad that Autolycus, the knavish peddler, has for sale in the *Winter's Tale*. The one he repeats is, however, more of a song than a ballad : —

*Clown.* What hast here? ballads?

*Mopsa.* Pray now, buy some. I love a ballad in print,  
O' life, for then we are sure they are true.

*Autolycus.* Here's one to a very doleful tune.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Mopsa.* Let's have some merry ones.

*Autolycus.* Why, this is a passing merry one, and goes  
to the tune of *Two Maids wooing a Man*. There's  
scarce a maid westward but she sings it; 'tis in request I  
can tell you.

Falstaff is thinking of a ballad of this kind when he says, "An I have not ballads made on you all and sung to filthy tunes, let a cup of sack be my poison." Current happenings that were of general interest were made the subjects of ballads. The story of Othello forms the subject of one which Mr. Collier states that he found among the papers of Lord Ellsmere, chancellor to James I, in a volume of manuscript ballads probably copied from old broadsides. It closes:—

Then with the dagger that was wet  
With his deare ladies blood,  
He stabbed himself and thus out let  
His soule in gory flood.  
This story true, you oftimes knew,  
By actors played for meede  
But still so well 'twas hard to tell  
If 'twas not truth in deede.

Dick Burbidge that most famous man,  
That actor without peere,

With this same part his course began  
And kept it many a yeare.  
Shakespeare was fortunate I trow  
That such an actor had,  
If we had but his equale now,  
For one I should be glad."

The date of this cannot be fixed with precision, but it illustrates very well the character of the broadside ballads. It will be noticed that it is ballad measure with the addition of rhyme in the first and third lines and occasional internal rhyme in the same lines. That this measure had a secure lodgment in the popular ear is shown by the fact that the *Bay Psalm Book*, the first publication in America, about 1640, is in this same measure, as is also Michael Wigglesworth's *Day of Doom*, published in this country in 1662. Some of the Puritan ministers, it is true, were university men, but in spirit they belonged to the people rather than to the aristocratic literary class. The 138th Psalm was rendered as follows:—

The waters on — of Babylon  
There where we did sit down  
Yea even then — we mourned when  
We remembered Zion.

The use of this meter must be held to prove that ballads in this form were very generally known and recited in the early seventeenth century even by sober-minded persons.

During the eighteenth century, in the reigns of Addison, Pope, and Dr. Johnson, the ballad was despised. Letters were "polite," and the ballad is not polished. In 1765 Thomas Percy, afterwards Bishop of Dromore, a lover of popular song, published a collection of ballads taken from a manuscript given him by a friend. Here were a number of ballads on historical, legendary, and romantic subjects gathered by somebody that loved them. Dr. Johnson considered them rubbish, but Thomas Gray was able to see their genuine poetic qualities apart from their interest as antiques. Goldsmith, who even in his college days wrote and sang ballads, produced two or three. And Cowper, who felt with many others a weariness of academic moral verse clothed in the rhymed pentameter, wrote the excellent comic ballad, *John Gilpin's Ride*. Then Burns, in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, showed the world that verses acceptable to the people, and sung or recited by the cottar's fire-side or in the village tavern, were delightful to all. Wordsworth went so far as to hold the theory that the "short and simple annals of the poor" told in the language of the uneducated were the proper stuff of poetry. His desire for naturalness and unaffected simplicity in manner, diction, and thought overdid itself in such poems as the *Idiot Boy*, *Goody Blake*, and *Peter Bell*, which approach dangerously near the ridiculous. Coleridge in the *Ancient Mariner* showed that the elements of folk song



contained in the ballad on a supernatural subject could be combined by genius into an extraordinary and powerful art production. The old ballad exerted a great influence on letters, an influence towards simplicity and interest in poetic narrative which later poets have felt in greater or less degree. Scott from youth loved the Border ballads of his country, and made a collection taken principally from the recitations of men and women who preserved ancestral songs in memory. His own poems like *Lay of the Last Minstrel* and *Marmion* are largely extensions of traditionary ballads, and he was of course an enthusiastic lover of the poetry of Burns. Burns is, however, a writer of songs rather than of ballads in the strict sense, but his verse is full of the popular element. During the nineteenth century nearly every poet wrote some ballads, notably: Mrs. Browning — *The Song of the Brown Rosary* and the *Rime of the Duchess May*; Robert Browning — *Hervé Riel* and *How They brought Good News from Ghent to Aix*; Tennyson — *Lord Burleigh*; Rossetti — *The White Ship*, *Rosemary, Troy Town*, etc. Thus the old ballad spirit, so long submerged but vigorous, brought to literature an element of interest and ~~objective directness~~ which it sadly needed, and enriched it with many poems of perennial attraction. These "literary ballads" of the nineteenth century must not be confounded with genuine old ballads. They are of course more finished, far more artistic, and they have a far wider

outlook on the world, they embody more thought and plan, but they lack the delightful freshness and spontaneity and democratic quality of their prototypes. A wayside flower may grow larger and more luxuriant under cultivation, but part of its original beauty came from our consciousness of its homely, natural surroundings. If the old English ballad owed anything to the "courtly minstrelsy of the fourteenth century," the debt is amply repaid.

The old English ballads are anonymous. The authors of *Chevy Chase*, *The Nut-brown Maid*, and *Bewick and Grahame* are unknown. *Chevy Chase*, doubtless, owes something of its present form to successive reciters, but even if it does, the original composer possessed no slight title to recognition and remembrance. The others may be more nearly in the form in which they were composed, and even if they are built upon former poems, are poetical works of a high order to which any man might be proud to sign his name as author. The personality of the author of popular literature is always in the background. His name is not signed to his work before the age of printing, and not always in later centuries. He did not belong to the literary guild. There was no copyright. His production belonged to the people, to any one who could learn and sing it. Possibly in many cases his social station was no higher than that of the "blind crowder" who sang his ballad. Whether he was a professional enter-

tainer, a "wandering minstrel" who went from market place to market place and played and sang for his lodging and such reward as he might pick up, or whether he was an "honest tradesman" who had the gift, and sang at social gatherings among his friends, his name is forgotten in the natural course of events. He was not the inventor of a style nor a "leader of thought," (but simply the mouthpiece of his countrymen in a matter of traditional vogue, and he was one of a great number. He coöperated with his audience, who in a sense were quite as necessary to the production of his song as he was himself. He was not an extraordinary phenomenon as a modern poet takes himself to be, and took no pains to perpetuate his name. And so, the men or succession of men who composed the Robin Hood ballads have passed into oblivion with the man who copied them into the manuscript book happily found by Percy and the cook who tore out some of the pages to light his fires.

The fact that the old ballads are anonymous, coupled with the fact that traditional versions handed down in different places vary so greatly, has given rise to the theory that the old ballads were not composed but grew, and thus are a popular product in a peculiar sense as much as a tribal language is. According to this theory early singing is a communal matter. A crowd, engaged perhaps in some occupation like beating out the heads of grain, is gathered. One or another sings a

verse of the traditional song, and the crowd unites in the chorus. Verses are extemporized to the tune, and in the course of years a ballad is developed. That there was a time when language and poetry were in a fluent and undeveloped state and rhythmical utterance was unmeaning like a modern college yell — which also is anonymous — no one can doubt. An early stage of this “throng poetry” can be observed among the country negroes of the South, who sometimes accompany work done in common with a very primitive song and an unmeaning chorus or refrain. But even here there is always a leader who does the extemporizing and has a reputation among his comrades for this sort of ability. The Englishmen of the fifteenth century whose ballads have come down to us were far beyond this linguistic stage, and doubtless some one man made up the ballads, though his song kept growing and changing with subsequent repetitions. Some of the flavor of the very earliest rhythmical utterance hangs about the old ballads in the directness of the phrases and the simplicity of the tunes. Granting that they borrowed material from the courtly romances about the Round Table Knights and possibly adopted in part the manner of the courtly minstrels, the folk quality is evident, and in large measure they must be regarded as folk literature, — natural and indigenous poetry, — but still as the products of individual authors. Norman culture was grafted on the

English stock, but in the ballads the stock determined the characteristics of the flower.

Closely related to the anonymity of the ballads is their objectivity. The narrator tells his story simply, and interjects no subjective emotion, very much as if a bystander of the occurrences should recall them to other bystanders. He assumes that they are familiar with the story, and his narrative is abrupt and disconnected and allusive. At most he may close with the remark, "And when they fight another time may I be there to see," or in the admirable ballad of *Bewick and Grahame* he may say, "I for one think these old men to blame," otherwise the pronoun *I* is never used nor is there any of the lyrical attempt to impart to the hearers the singer's personal emotion. Broad communal or national or human feelings only are appealed to, and appealed to by narrative and not by description.

What we call literary merit in the specialized sense is not to be looked for in the ballads. Occasionally there is a phrase or two of reach and power, as when the singer in *Chevy Chase* describes the death of Hugh Montgomery in two lines:—

An arrow that a cloth-yard was long  
To the harde steel hailed he,  
A dynt it was both sad and sore  
He set on Sir Hugh the Montgomery.

\* \* \* \* \*

The dynt it was both sad and sore  
That he of Montgomery set,  
*The swan's feathers that his arrow bore*  
*With his heart's blood they were wet;*

or the great stanza closing *Sir Patrick Spens* :

Half ower, half ower to Aberdour,  
'Tis fifty fathoms deep;  
And there lies good Sir Patrick Spens  
Wi' the Scots lords at his feet.

or a beautiful, fresh phrase or two in the Robin Hood ballads describing some feature of the "good green wood"; but as a rule the singer is intent on his story. He uses no similes and indulges in few, and they the most obvious, reflections. He uses conventional epithets to which his hearers are accustomed. Gold is always "red," the ladies "fair." Certain numbers, as "three"<sup>1</sup> and "seven," recur without definite meaning. "A league, a league, but barely three" means merely a short distance, or more than two leagues. "Three times round went our gallant ship, three times round went she," is probably a conventionalized expression dating from before the conquest of Britain, and means merely that the ship fell off into the trough of the sea and sank. The ethical tone of the ballads is manly; the fantastic notions of chivalry do not animate the personages so much as

<sup>1</sup> The expression "Three times and out" is very likely a survival of the ancient regard for the number three.

the human characteristics of constancy and loyalty. The quality of genuineness belongs to them in form and substance. There is no pretense, no false standard, no striving for effect. The ballads are germane to us as early Teutonic expression, not merely entertaining as antique bric-a-brac. They give us glimpses of the inherited superstitions of our forefathers which antedate Puritanism. We can see in a general way what they considered right and honorable and how life and mystery appeared to them, for we have in the ballads something that they liked and handed down in memory and in fact created without much influence from French or Latin literary traditions.

The old English and Scotch ballads have not come down to us through the medium of carefully written manuscript preserved in libraries nor through the medium of printed books. If they were printed, it usually was on a sheet of paper and not in book form. Here and there a person would write copies in a manuscript book, very much as one nowadays collects ephemeral verse from the newspapers in a scrap-book. There was no such thing as a standard text, and when the same ballad has been written down more than once, the versions vary materially. The most important of the old manuscripts is the Percy book before mentioned. Some of the broadsides or printed ballads were collected and preserved by those who had a taste for such things, and these

collections in one or two instances found a resting place in some of the English and Scotch libraries. After the publication of the Percy manuscript, Sir Walter Scott and others made a collection of Scotch ballads as they were taken from persons here and there who sang them and had learned them in childhood. Scott's Minstrelsy and Motherwell's collection are among the most important. (Professor Child of Harvard collected two hundred and sixty-five ballads from all sources and printed them in eight volumes, giving many variants and the authority for each and paying especial attention to accuracy, preserving some that might have been lost, and bringing all into a convenient form. It is not likely that many more can be discovered lingering in the memory of old persons in out-of-the-way places.

The old ballads may be roughly divided according to subject-matter: 1st. Those treating of some tale of traditionary superstition: A minstrel or knight is beloved by the queen of Elfland and taken by her for seven years to the underworld. A man captures a fairy maiden, and she becomes his loving wife for seven years, till some chance happening breaks the spell and she returns to the underworld. A man is challenged by a repulsive hag to kiss her; he does so, and the enchantment is dispelled and she becomes a blooming maiden. A woman leaves husband and children for an attractive lover who turns out to be a demon and kills



her. Some of these stories are very old and are found in various forms in all languages and undoubtedly formed part of the folklore of the earliest peoples. It is easy for us to read a moral into many of them, but of course none was consciously intended. Of the lady who sails away with a demon who beguiles her in the form of her early lover, we are told : —

She hadna sailed a league, a league,  
A league but barely twa,  
Till she did mind on the husband she left,  
And her wee young son alsua.

\* \* \* \* \*

“O haud your tongue, my dearest dear,  
Let all your follies abee ;  
I'll show you where the white lilies grow  
On the banks of Italie.”

She hadna sailed a league, a league,  
A league but barely three,  
Till, grim, grim grew his countenance,  
And gurly grew the sea.

“O haud your tongue, my dearest dear,  
Let all your follies abee ;  
I'll show you where the white lilies grow,  
In the bottom of the sea.”

Which he proceeds to do. In some of the variants of this ballad the picture of domestic happiness destroyed is simply and touchingly presented.

Thomas the Rhymer is a good illustration of the modified race legend. In Germany it appears as the story of Tannhäuser in which the queen of the elves is made over into the Roman goddess Venus. It is given here in a modernized North of England form from Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Border* : —

True Thomas lay on Huntley bank —  
A ferlie<sup>1</sup> he spied with his ee ;  
And there he saw a lady bright  
Coming riding down by the Eildon<sup>2</sup> Tree.

Her shirt was o' the grass-green silk,  
Her mantle o' the velvet fine ;  
At ilka tett<sup>3</sup> of her horse's mane  
Hung fifty siller bells and nine.

True Thomas he pulled aff his cap,  
And louted low down to his knee,  
“All hail thou mighty Queen of Heaven,  
For thy peer on earth I never did see.”

“O no, O no, Thomas,” she said,  
“That name does not belang to me —  
I am but the Queen of fair Elf-land  
That am hither come to visit thee.”

“Harp, and carp,<sup>4</sup> Thomas,” she said,  
“Harp and carp along wi me ;  
And if ye dare to kiss my lips,  
Sure of your bodie I will be.”

<sup>1</sup> *Ferlie*, a wonder.

<sup>3</sup> *Tett*, a braid or lock.

<sup>2</sup> *Eildon Tree*, Ercildown tree.

<sup>4</sup> *Harp and carp*, play and sing.

"Betide me weal, betide me woe  
That weird <sup>1</sup> shall never daunt me."  
Synne he has kissed her rosy lips,  
All underneath the Eildon Tree.

"Now ye maun go wi me," she said,  
"True Thomas ; ye maun go wi me.  
And ye maun serve me seven years  
Through weal or woe as may chance to be."

She mounted on her milk-white steed,  
She's ta'en True Thomas up behind ;  
And aye whenever her bridle rung,  
The steed flew swifter than the wind.

O, they rade on and farther on,  
The steed gaed swifter than the wind,  
Until they reached a desert wide,  
And living land was left behind.

"Light down, light down, now, True Thomas,  
And lean your head upon my knee,  
Abide and rest a little space,  
And I will show you ferlies three.

"O, see ye not yon narrow road,  
So thick beset with thorns and briars ?  
That is the path of Righteousness,  
Though after it but few enquires.

"And see ye not that braid, braid road  
That lies across that lily leven ? <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Weird*, fatal consequence.

<sup>2</sup> *Leven*, a lawn or meadow.

That is the path of wickedness,  
Though some call it the road to heaven.

“ And see ye not that bonnie road  
That winds around the ferny brae?  
That is the road to fair Elf-land,  
Where thou and I this night maun gae.

“ But, Thomas, ye maun hold your tongue  
Whatever ye may hear or see,  
For if you speak word in Elfyn-land  
Ye’ll ne’er get back to your ain countrie.”

O, they rode on and farther on,  
And they waded through rivers aboon the knee,  
And they saw neither sun nor moon,  
But they heard the roaring of the sea.

It was mirk, mirk night, there was nae stern<sup>1</sup>-light,  
And they waded through red blude to the knee,  
For a’ the blude that’s shed on earth  
Rins through the springs o’ that countrie.

This is one of the best examples of the ballad of supernatural incident. The conception that all the blood that’s shed on earth runs through the springs of the underworld is certainly a powerful one. The two roads — the straight and narrow path of righteousness and the broad road of worldly pleasure — are supplemented by the pleasant path of fancy winding around the ferny hillside. Does not this suggest a fuller correspondence to real conditions?

<sup>1</sup> *Stern*, star.

We may follow duty, we may follow pleasure, or we may live the life of the imagination.

The ballad with a supernatural motive has given rise to a number of literary ballads of the highest class: Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, Keats's *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, Rossetti's *King's Tragedy*, *Rosemary*, and *Sister Helen*, Buchanan's *Judas Iscariot*, and many others.

*H/a* The second class covers ballads on historical subjects which may be subdivided into those on traditionary, semi-mythical history, and those on historical events which took place within the memory of men for whom the ballad was first written. Of the first division those celebrating the deeds of Robin Hood and his "merry men" are representative. They fill entirely one of Professor Child's volumes. Some attempts have been made to prove that the hero was a living person, but without much success. He is probably a traditionary character of the imagination, and became an embodiment of the love of the Anglican race for outdoor life, hunting, and fighting. As he is treated as a real person and his adventures are all within the bounds of actuality, much more so than those of Ulysses or of Arthur, we may call him, without doing violence to words, a semi-historical personage, although he never existed outside of the ballads and Scott's *Ivanhoe*. He lived in the minds of the people at least.

*24* The ballad of traditional history occupies a middle place between the ballad of mythical history and the true historical ballad. Its subject is historical incident so far removed in time as to be uncertain in its outlines. The "grand old ballad of Sir Patrick Spens," as Coleridge justly called it, *Some historical history* is a fair representative of this subdivision, and there is no precise line of demarcation between it and the true historical ballad, as the proportion of fact and imaginative accretion ranges between wide limits, and the basis of fact is never entirely absent in tradition, nor is imagination ever entirely absent from historical songs even if composed soon after the event. The true historical ballads are those like *Chevy Chase* or *Flodden Field* or the *Battle of Philippsburgh*, all on events which are recorded in history. Many of these are very imperfect as they have come down to us. The best literary ballad founded on this form is Scott's *Marmion*, which is almost epical in dignity and breadth. Many of them are founded on minor historical episodes. A splendid modern representative is Rossetti's *White Ship*. Longfellow's *Paul Revere's Ride*, Whittier's *Mogg Megone* and *Barbara Frietchie* are fine ballads founded on minor historical incidents.

*III* The third class covers a wide range of subjects, usually tragic or pathetic. Lovers are separated by adverse circumstances and exhibit admirable constancy. A jealous sister, as in the strikingly

poetic ballad of *Binnorie*, compasses the death of the younger in a very cold-blooded and unrelenting manner. In the admirable ballad of *Bewick* and *Grahame* two "bullys" — sworn friends — are induced to fight by their fathers. One kills the other and then kills himself. As in the historical ballads, the motives of the characters are of primitive simplicity and their action is direct — there is no Hamlet-like hesitation in love or jealousy. *Hynde Etin* is a ballad which, in one version — probably the oldest one — represents Etin as a forest demon, who obtains possession of the Lady Margaret by magic. In *Etin the Forester* he is represented as an outlaw, and the story turns on love and constancy. The ballad is then of the third class, the supernatural element having been displaced by the romantic.

#### ETIN THE FORESTER

Lady Margaret sits in her bower door  
Sewing the silken seam.

She heard a not<sup>1</sup> in Elmond's wood  
And wished she there had been.

She let the silk fall to her foot  
The needle to her tae,  
And she is aff to Elmond's wood  
As fast as she could gae.

She hadna pulled a nut, a nut,  
Nor broken a branch but ane,

<sup>1</sup> *Not*, a note of the forester's horn.

Till by there cam' a young hynd chiel  
Says "Lady lat alane.

"O why pu' ye the nut, the nut  
Or why brake ye the tree  
For I am forester o' this wood  
You should spier leave at me."

"I'll spier leave at na living man  
Nor yet will I at thee,  
My father is lord of all this wood  
This wood belongs to me."

"You're welcome to the wood Margaret  
You're welcome here to me ;  
A fairer bower than e'er you saw  
I'll bigg this night for thee."

He has bigged a bower beside the thorne  
He has fenced it up with stane  
And there within the Elmond wood  
They twa has dwelt their lane.

He kept her in the Elmond wood  
For twelve lang years and mair,  
And seven fair sons to Hynd Etin  
Did that fair lady bare.

It fell out once upon a day  
To the hunting he has gane,  
And he has taken his eldest son  
To gang alang wi him.

When they were in the gay greenwood  
They heard the mavis sing,



When they were up aboon the brae  
They heard the kirk bells ring.

“O I wad ask ye something father  
An ye wadna angry be.”

“Say on, say on my bonny boy  
Ye’s e nae be quarrelled by me.”

“My mother’s cheeks are oftimes weet  
It’s seldom they are dry.

What is it gars my mither greet  
And sob sae bitterlie?”

“Nae wonder she suld greet my boy  
Nae wonder she suld pine,  
For it’s twelve lang years and mair  
She’s seen nor kith nor kin.  
And it’s twelve lang years and mair  
Since to the kirk she’s been.

“Your mither was an Earl’s daughter,  
And cam’ o’ high degree,  
And she might hae wedded the first in the land  
Had she nae been stown by me.

“For I was but her father’s page  
And served him on my knee,  
And yet my love was great for her  
And sae was hers for me.”

“I’ll shoot the laverock i’ the lift  
The buntin on the tree  
And bring them to my mither hame  
See if she’ll merrier be.”

It fell upon anither day  
This forester thought lang  
And he is to the hunting gane  
The forest leaves amang.

Wi bow and arrow by his side  
He took his path alane  
And left his seven young children  
To bide wi their mither at hame.

"O I wad ask ye something mither  
An ye wadna angry be."  
"Ask on, ask on my eldest son  
Ask onything at me."

"Your cheeks are aft-times weet mither ;  
You're greetin' as I can see."  
"Nae wonder, nae wonder, my little son,  
Nae wonder though I should dee.

"For I was ance an Earl's daughter  
Of noble birth and fame ;  
And now I'm the mither of seven sons  
Wha ne'er gut christendame."

He has ta'en his mither by the hand  
His six brithers also,  
And they are on through Elmond wood  
As fast as they could go.

They wistna well wha they were gaen  
And weary were their feet ;  
They wistna well where they were gaen  
Till they stopped at her father's gate.

"I hae nae money in my pocket  
But jewel-rings I hae three,  
I'll gie them to you, my little son,  
And ye'll enter there for me.

"Ye'll gie the first to the proud porter  
And he will lat you in,  
Ye'll gie the next to the butler-boy  
And he will show you ben.

"Ye'll gie the third to the minstrel  
That's harping in the ha',  
And he'll play good luck to the bonny boy  
That comes frae the greenwood shaw."

He gied the first to the proud porter,  
And he opened and lat him in,  
He gied the next to the butler-boy,  
And he has shown him ben.

\* \* \* \* \*

Now when he cam before the Earl  
He louted on his knee.  
The Earl he turned him round about  
And the salt tear blint his e'e.

"Win up, win up, thou bonny boy,  
Gang frae my companie,  
Ye look sae like my dear daughter,  
My heart will burst in three."

"An if I look like your dear daughter,  
A wonder it is none,  
If I look like your dear daughter,  
I am her eldest son."

"O tell me soon, ye little wee boy,  
Where may my Margaret be?"  
"She's e'en now standing at your gates  
And my six brothers her wi."

"O where are all my porter-boys  
That I pay meat and fee,  
To open my gates baith braid and wide,  
And let her come in to me."

When she cam in before the Earl  
She fell down low on her knee.  
"Win up, win up, my daughter dear,  
This day ye'se dine wi me."

"Ae bit I canna eat father,  
Ae drop I canna drink,  
Till I see Etin my husband dear,  
Sae lang for him I think."

"O where are a' my rangers bold  
That I pay meat and fee,  
To search the forest far and wide,  
And bring Hynd Etin to me."

Out it speaks the little wee boy  
"Na, na, this maunna be,  
Without ye grant a free pardon  
I hope ye'll na him see."

"O here I grant a free pardon,  
Well sealed wi my ain hand,  
And mak ye search for Hynd Etin  
As sune as ever ye can."

They searched the country braid and wide,  
The forest far and near,  
And they found him into Elmond-wood,  
Tearing his yellow hair.

“Win up, win up now, Hynd Etin,  
Win up, and boun wi me,  
For we are come frae the Castle,  
And the Earl would fain you see.”

“O lat him tak my head,” he says,  
“Or hang me on a tree,  
For sin’ I’ve lost my dear lady  
My life’s nae worth to me.”

“Your head will not be touched Etin,  
Nor sall you hang on tree,  
Your lady’s in her father’s court,  
And all he wants is thee.”

When he cam’ in before the Earl  
He louted on his knee.  
“Win up, win up, now Hynd Etin  
This day ye’s dine wi me.”

As they were at their dinner set  
The boy he asked a boon.  
“I wold we were in holy kirk  
To get our christendoun.

“For we hae lived in the good greenwood  
These twelve lang years and ane,  
But a’ this time since e’er I mind  
Was never a kirk within.”

"Your asking's na sae great my boy  
But granted it sall be,  
This day to holy kirk sall ye gang  
And your mither sall gang you wi."

When she cam to the holy kirk  
She at the door did stan'  
She was sae sunken down wi shame  
She couldna come further ben.

Then out it spak' the haly priest,  
Wi a kindly word spak he,  
"Com ben, come ben, my lily-flower,  
And bring your babes to me."

Ballads of this class, when short, differ but little from songs. As long as there is a narrative contained in them, even though it is not directly told, but poetically embodied, they are, however, properly ballads. Two very fine short ballads are *Edward* and *The Mill Dams of Binnorie*. *The Twa Corbies* has but little of the ballad character except that, like the other two, it is a production of true poetic inspiration. *The Lament of the Border Widow* given below can hardly be called a ballad though an incident is touchingly presented. At all events it is close to the defining line.

#### THE LAMENT OF THE BORDER WIDOW

My Love he built me a bonnie bower,  
And clad it a' wi' the lily flower;  
A brawer bower ye ne'er did see  
Than my true Love he built for me.

There came a man by middle day,  
He spied his sport and went away,  
And brought the king that very night,  
Who brake my bower and slew my knight.

He slew my knight to me sae dear,  
He slew my knight and poin'd his gear ;  
My servants all for life did flee,  
And left me in extremity.

I sew'd his sheet making my mane,  
I watch'd the corpse, myself alane,  
I watched his body night and day, —  
No living creature came that way.

I took his body on my back,  
And whiles I gaed and whiles I sat ;  
I digg'd a grave and laid him in,  
And happ'd him wi' the sod sae green.

But think na ye my heart was sair  
When I laid the moul' on his yellow hair?  
O, think na ye my heart was wae  
When I turned about, away to gae'?

Nae living man I'll love again,  
Since that my lovely knight is slain ;  
Wi' ae lock o' his yellow hair  
I'll chain my heart forevermair.

It is quite evident that this is a comparatively modern production. The last line alone is enough to prove it so. *Binnorie*, on the contrary, bears the hall mark of antiquity. It was printed in 1656,

but still exists in tradition, and is preserved in many different versions.

## THE TWA SISTERS

There were twa sisters sat in a bour ;  
    Binnorie, O Binnorie,  
There came a knight to be their wooer,  
    By the bonnie mill dams of Binnorie.

He courted the eldest wi' glove and ring  
But he lo'ed the youngest aboon a' thing.

The eldest she was vexed sair  
And sore envied her sister fair.

The eldest said to the youngest ane,  
"Will ye go and see our father's ships come in?"

She's ta'en her by the lily hand,  
And led her down to the river strand.

The youngest stood upon a stane,  
The eldest came and pushed her in.

"O Sister, Sister, reach your hand  
And ye shall be heir of half my land."

"O Sister, I'll not reach my hand  
And I'll be heir of all your land."

Shame fa' the hand that I should take,  
It's twin'd me and my world's make.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Make, mate.*



"O Sister, reach me but your glove,  
And sweet William shall be your love."

"Sink on, nor hope for hand or glove,  
And sweet William shall better be my love."

"Your cherry lips and your yellow hair  
Garred me gang maiden ever mair."

Sometimes she sunk and sometimes she swam  
Until she came to the miller's dam.

O father, father, draw your dam  
There's either a mermaid or a milk-white swan.

The miller hasted and drew his dam  
And there he found a drowned woman.

In all the versions harp strings or fiddle strings are made from the drowned girl's hair, which disclose the elder sister's guilt when used. The refrain which should be repeated with every stanza adds much to the effect of this interesting ballad.

Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* is the best example of the regenerative effect of the popular ballad spirit when infused into a modern poem, and Buchanan's *Judas Iscariot* has caught the note with hardly less success.

#### THE BALLAD OF JUDAS ISCARIOT

'Twas the body of Judas Iscariot  
Lay in the field of blood ;  
'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot  
Beside the body stood.

Black was the earth by night,  
And black was the sky ;  
Black, black were the broken clouds  
Though the red moon went by.

'Twas the body of Judas Iscariot  
Strangled and dead lay there ;  
'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot  
Looked on it in despair.

The breath of the world came and went  
Like a sick man's in rest,  
Drop by drop on the world's eyes  
The dews fell cool and blest.

Then the soul of Judas Iscariot  
Did make a gentle moan ;  
" I will bury beneath the ground  
My flesh and blood and bone.

" I will bury deep beneath the soil  
Lest mortals look thereon,  
And when the wolf and raven come  
The body will be gone.

" The stones of the field are sharp as steel  
And hard and cold God wot,  
And I must bear my body hence  
Until I find a spot."

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot,  
So grim and gaunt and gray,  
Raised the body of Judas Iscariot  
And carried it away.

And as he bare it from the field  
Its touch was cold as ice,  
And the ivory teeth within the jaw  
Rattled aloud like dice.

As the soul of Judas Iscariot  
Carried its load with pain,  
The Eye of Heaven like a lantern's eye  
Opened and shut again.

Half he walked and half he seemed  
Lifted on the cold wind ;  
He did not turn, for chilly hands  
Were pushing from behind.

The first place that he came unto  
It was the open wold,  
And underneath were prickly whins  
And a wind that blew so cold.

The next place that he came unto  
It was a stagnant pool,  
And when he threw the body in  
It floated light as wool.

He drew the body on his back  
And it was dripping chill,  
And the next place that he came unto  
Was a cross upon a hill.

A cross upon the windy hill,  
And a cross on either side,  
Three skeletons that swing thereon  
Who had been crucified.

And on the middle cross-bar sat  
A white dove slumbering,  
Dim it sat in the dim light,  
With its head beneath its wing.

And underneath the middle cross  
A grave yawned wide and vast ;  
But the soul of Judas Iscariot  
Shivered and glided past.

The fourth place that he came unto  
It was the Brig of Dread,  
And the great torrents rushing down  
Were deep and swift and red.

He dared not fling the body in  
For fear of faces dim,  
And arms were waved in the wild water  
To thrust it back to him.

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot  
Turned from the Brig of Dread,  
And the dreadful foam of the wild water  
Had splashed the body red.

\* \* \* \* \*

For days and nights he wandered on  
All through the Wood of Woe ;  
And the nights went by like moaning wind,  
And the days like drifting snow.

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot  
Came with a weary face,  
Alone, alone, and all alone,  
Alone in a lonely place.

He wandered east, he wandered west  
And heard no human sound ;  
For months and years, in grief and tears,  
He wandered round and round.

For months and years in grief and tears  
He walked the silent night.  
Then the soul of Judas Iscariot  
Perceived a far-off light.

A far-off light across the waste,  
As dim as dim might be,  
That came and went like a lighthouse gleam  
On a black night at sea.

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot  
Crawled to the distant gleam,  
And the rain came down, and the rain was blown  
Against him with a scream.

\* \* \* \* \*

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot  
Strange, and sad, and tall,  
Stood all alone at dead of night  
Before a lighted hall.

And the wold was white with snow,  
And his footmarks black and damp;  
And the ghost of the silver moon arose,  
Holding his yellow lamp.

\* \* \* \* \*

The shadows of the wedding guests  
Did strangely come and go ;  
And the body of Judas Iscariot  
Lay stretched along the snow.

The body of Judas Iscariot  
Lay stretched along the snow ;  
'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot  
Ran swiftly to and fro.

To and fro, and up and down  
He ran so swiftly there,  
As round and round the frozen pole  
Glideth the lean white bear.

'Twas the Bridegroom sat at the table-head,  
And the lights burned bright and clear,  
"O, who is that?" the Bridegroom said —  
"Whose weary feet I hear?"

'Twas one looked from the lighted hall,  
And answered soft and slow —  
"It is a wolf runs up and down  
With a black track in the snow."

The Bridegroom in his robe of white,  
Sat at the table-head.  
"O who is that who moans without?"  
The blessed Bridegroom said.

'Twas one looked from the lighted hall,  
And answered fierce and low,  
"'Tis the soul of Judas Iscariot  
Gliding to and fro!"

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot  
Did hush itself and stand,  
And saw the Bridegroom at the door,  
With a light in his hand.

The Bridegroom stood in the open door,  
And he was clad in white,  
And far within the Lord's supper  
Was spread so long and bright.

The Bridegroom shaded his eyes and looked,  
And his face was bright to see ;  
"What dost thou here at the Lord's supper  
With thy body's sins?" said he.

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot  
Stood black, and sad, and bare,  
"I have wandered many nights and days,  
There is no light elsewhere."

'Twas the wedding guests cried out within,  
And their eyes were fierce and bright ;  
"Scourge the soul of Judas Iscariot  
Away into the night."

\* \* \* \* \*

'Twas the Bridegroom stood at the open door,  
And beckoned smiling sweet ;  
'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot  
Stole in, and fell at his feet.

"The Holy supper is spread within,  
And the many candles shine,  
And I have waited long for thee  
Before I poured the wine."

The supper wine is poured at last,  
The lights burn bright and fair;  
Iscariot washes the Bridegroom's feet,  
And dries them with his hair.

As the ballad is a Teutonic form and has grown up among English-speaking people, it is germane to our race. A versified incident told with directness, simplicity, and rapidity, and appealing to the primitive emotions only, is sure to please even the modern generation. It has more affinity to our spiritual natures than descriptive or reflective verse has. Bret Harte's *John Burns at Gettysburg* and Whittier's *Barbara Frietchie* are ballad-like in form, and in them poetry has its true character as a social force, something not confined to the cultured, but appealing to the people through an ancestral form. It must be a matter of regret that ballad composing and singing is not more general than it is among our people. With us the production of oral, popular poetry has largely taken the form of composing and singing hymns, which being confined to a narrow range of emotion, lack the germinal and developing power of ballads. For this very reason the study of the old ballads is especially valuable to Americans.

The impulse which a true poet feels to speak directly to his fellow-men and not merely through books to the few, the consciousness that poetry is a broadly human expression, inspired the following sonnet by Hartley Coleridge : —

Could I but harmonize one kindly thought,  
Fix one fair image in a snatch of song  
Which maids might warble as they tripped along,





## CHAPTER III

### THE SONNET

THE sonnet is in every regard different from the ballad. It is of a fixed length and meter, — fourteen iambic pentameters. It is a foreign importation and has been used exclusively by the literary class; the ballad is indigenous and belongs primarily to the people. The sonnet is never recited or sung, though its Italian original, "sonnetto," means little song, and there are no anonymous sonnets. But as the sonnet form has been used with brief intermissions in our language since the sixteenth century and since the thirteenth century in Italy, it, too, has stood the test of time, and if it does not contain any popular quality, must have in itself an element of artistic perfection.

The rules of the construction of a pure or Italian sonnet are: 1st. As said above, it must consist of fourteen five-accent lines of ten syllables each. 2d. It must be divided metrically into two parts; the first or octave — or octette — is made of eight lines, rhyming *a-b-b-a-a-b-b-a*, the remaining six lines, the sextette, rhyming in any fashion on either two or three terminals, as, *c-d-c-d-c-d*, or *c-d-e-e-d-c*.

There are several other admissible arrangements in the octave, but the pure sonnet must be as above.

The rules for the logical construction are less positive. They are: The octave should terminate with a period. It should make the statement or contain the description from which the sextette draws the conclusion or reflection. Many of Milton's and Wordsworth's sonnets do not observe this last rule; the conclusion is sometimes confined to the two or three closing lines or left to the reader. But the best effect is attained when the logical divisions correspond nearly to the metrical divisions. The following sonnet by Blanco White illustrates the principle, and was ranked very high by Coleridge:—

NIGHT

Mysterious Night ! when our first parent knew  
Thee from report divine and heard thy name,  
Did he not tremble for this lovely frame,  
This glorious canopy of light and blue?  
Yet 'neath a curtain of translucent dew,  
Bathed in the rays of the great setting flame,  
Hesperus with the host of heaven came,  
And, lo ! creation widened in man's view.

Who could have thought such darkness lay concealed  
Within thy beams, O Sun ! or who could find  
Whilst flower and leaf and insect stood revealed  
That to such countless orbs thou mad'st us blind !  
Why do we then shun death with anxious strife?  
If Light can thus deceive, wherefore not Life?

Here the fundamental idea of the emotion of the first man on seeing the first sunset is contained in the octave. The reflection that no one could imagine that an unknown universe is revealed by darkness and may be still further disclosed by death is put into the sextette. The following sonnet by Wordsworth is all description permeated by emotion. There is no real logical division, though the metrical division is of course observed.

WESTMINSTER BRIDGE (SUNRISE)

Earth has not anything to show more fair ;  
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
A sight so touching in its majesty ;  
This city now doth like a garment wear  
The beauty of the morning ; silent, bare,  
Ships, towers, domes, theaters, and temples lie  
Open unto the fields and to the sky,  
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.  
Never did sun more beautifully steep  
In his first splendor valley, rock, or hill  
Ne'er saw I, never felt a calm so deep :  
The river glideth at his own sweet will :  
Dear God, the very houses seem asleep  
And all that mighty heart is lying still.

Keats's fine sonnet on looking into Chapman's Homer fulfills the logical conditions. The octave states that he had read much poetry, had heard of Homer, but knew nothing of his epic till he read Chapman's translation. The sextette describes his

emotion and compares it to that of Cortez when he first looked on a new ocean. It was in reality Balboa who discovered the Pacific, but the mistake does not affect the beauty of the sonnet.

Much have I traveled in the realms of gold,  
 And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;  
 Round many western islands have I been  
 Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.  
 Oft of one wide expanse had I been told  
 That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne;  
 Yet never did I breathe its pure serene  
 Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold.

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
 When a new planet swims into his ken,  
 Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes  
 He stared at the Pacific — and all his men  
 Looked at each other with a wild surmise  
 Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

Milton's sonnet on *The Late Massacre in Piedmont* is a tremendous invocation for vengeance, without a break from the first line to the last.

Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones  
 Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;  
 Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,  
 When all our fathers worshiped stocks and stones,  
 Forget not. In thy book record their groans  
 Who were thy sheep and in their ancient fold  
 Slain by the bloody Piedmontese that rolled  
 Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans

The vales redoubled to the hills and they c  
To heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow d  
O'er all the Italian folds where still doth sway c  
The triple tyrant ; that from these may grow d  
A hundredfold, who having learnt thy way c  
Early may fly the Babylonian woe. d

There is a metrical rule that all the rhymes in the octave should not be the same vowel. That is broken in the above, the *o* sound running through the octave and through half the sextette. It may be questioned, however, whether the emphasis of the curse is not strengthened by the monotonous repetition. There is another rule that a sonnet should not end with a couplet. The first example breaks this rule, and so do many of the strongest sonnets in the language. The early Italians laid down a number of minor regulations, requiring, for instance, that the octave should be grammatically divided into two quatrains, and the sextette into two terzettes. | These are an outcome of the disposition of the Latin mind to codify — to make minute regulations and ignore the principle of liberty under the law which gives life to all art products. | Technical rules are necessary, but they have their limitations, and genius interprets them better than pedantry can. The sonnet, it is true, is an artificial poem and therefore subject to rigid structural law, but these laws are not *a priori* and must be deduced from the practice of the great poets. The only rigid rules are questions of defi-

nition, and determine the length — fourteen lines — and the metrical division into octave and sextette.

There is a variant of the pure or Italian sonnet in which the rhymes in the octave are alternate *ab, abb, aba*, and follow the same order backward and forward. This does not differ much in melodic effect from the regular arrangement, and retains the advantage of unequal paragraphing in the independence of the octave and sextette. An example is Andrew Lang's sonnet on the thought that although antiquarian research violates the tombs of Cassandra and Agamemnon, still Homer remains an ideal source of a great poetic unity not analyzed into a set of minor balladists.

#### HOMERIC UNITY <sup>1</sup>

The Sacred soil of Ilios is rent	a
With shaft and pit ; foiled waters wander slow	b
Through plains where Simois and Scamander went	a
To war with gods and heroes long ago.	b
Nor yet to dark Cassandra lying low	b
In rich Mycenæ do the Fates relent ;	a
The bones of Agamemnon are a show,	a
And ruined is his royal monument.	a
The dust and awful treasures of the dead	c
Hath learning scattered wide, but vainly thee,	c
Homer, she measures with her Lesbian lead,	c
And strives to rend thy songs, too blind is she	c
To know the crown on thine immortal head	c
Of indivisible supremacy.	c

<sup>1</sup> Prefixed to the translation of the *Iliad*. London, 1883.

*The Irregular or Shakespearean Sonnet*

The sonnet form was introduced into English verse early in the sixteenth century by Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, two young men of culture and aristocratic birth, who admired the love sonnets of the Italian poet, Francis Petrarch, of the fourteenth century. Wyatt wrote thirty-three of these short poems and endeavored to adhere to the Italian form. Surrey wrote fifteen and departed from the Italian model, disregarding almost entirely the metrical and grammatical division into two parts of eight and six lines, and losing thereby most of the characteristic beauty of the sonnet form. The young Earl of Surrey, however, hit upon the form of three alternately rhyming quatrains and closing couplet which from its use by William Shakespeare fifty years later has been called the Shakespearean Sonnet. The rhyme scheme of this is *abab, cdcd, efef, gg*. The following is an example by Surrey : —

## ON THE LIFE AND DEATH OF SARDANAPALUS

The Assyrian King, in peace, with foul desire *a*  
 And filthy lusts that stained his regal heart, *b*  
 In war, that should set princely hearts on fire, *a*  
 Did yield, vanquisht for want of martial art. *b*  
 The dint of swords from kisses seemed strange, *c*  
 And harder than his lady's side his targe, *d*



From gluttons' feasts to soldiers' fare a change,<sup>c</sup>

His helmet, far above a garland's charge :<sup>d</sup>

Who scarce the name of manhood did retain<sup>e</sup>

Drenchéd in sloth and womanish delight,<sup>f</sup>

Feeble of spirit, impatient of pain,<sup>g</sup>

When he had lost his honor and his right —<sup>h</sup>

Proud time of wealth, in storms appalled with dread,<sup>i</sup>

Murdered himself to show some manful deed.<sup>j</sup>

Surrey was executed in his thirtieth year on a charge of high treason against Henry VIII, and it has been conjectured that the foregoing sonnet is a covert satire on the king, and that the king's resentment influenced the sentence to death. As, however, the young man and his father, the powerful Duke of Norfolk, had been guilty of constructive treason, and favored the Catholic party, the conjecture finds little support. Neither from the political nor from the literary standpoint is the sonnet quite bad enough to justify a resort to extreme measures.

In the latter half of the sixteenth century the sonnet became very popular. It was the recognized vehicle for both courtly compliments and philosophical thought. Several of the Elizabethan poets wrote "sonnet sequences," or a number of these short poems on the same general theme. Sir Philip Sidney wrote a series entitled *Astrophel and Stella* (Star-lover and Star), in honor of the beautiful Penelope Devereux, Lady Rich. He uses both forms indifferently, but, in common

with all the sonnet writers of the period, closes with a couplet. His are far better finished than those of Surrey and Wyatt. An example of each form is appended:—

Because I breathe not love to every one  
Nor do not use set colors for to wear,  
Nor nourish special locks of vowed hair,  
Nor give each speech a full point of a groan,  
The courtly nymphs acquainted with the moan  
Of them who in their lips Love's standard bear;  
"What he!" say they of me. "Now I dare swear  
He cannot love; no, no, let him alone."  
And think so still, so Stella know my mind;  
Profess, indeed, I do not Cupid's art;  
But you fair maids, at length this true shall find,  
That his right badge is worn but in the heart:  
Dumb swans, not chatt'ring pies, do lovers prove,  
They love indeed who quake to say they love.

#### DEATH AN ORDINANCE OF NATURE AND THEREFORE GOOD

Since Nature's works be good, and death doth serve  
As Nature's work, why should we fear to die?  
Since fear is vain but when it may preserve,  
Why should we fear that which we cannot fly?  
Fear is more pain than is the pain it fears,  
Disarming human minds of native might,  
While each conceit an ugly figure wears  
Which were not evil viewed in reason's light.  
Our owly eyes which dimmed with passions be,  
And scarce discern the dawn of coming day,  
Let them be cleared and now begin to see

Our life is but a step in dusty way.  
 Then let us hold the bliss of peaceful mind,  
 Since this we feel, great loss we cannot find.

— From the *Arcadia*.

Edmund Spenser wrote a large number of sonnets, most of which are addressed to his lady and entitled *Ammoretti*. He wrote the three-quatrain form with closing couplet, but devised the plan of linking the quatrains together by a common rhyme ending, his scheme being *abab, bcbe, cdcd ee*, thus making a metrical unit of twelve lines, followed by a unit of two lines, an arrangement not much superior in melodic effect to three quatrains and a couplet. His thought construction, however, almost invariably is paragraphed into eight lines and six. The form he invented is even more artificial and quite as hard to compose as the pure Italian, since it requires four rhymes on each of two terminals. Many of his sonnets are extremely beautiful in language and thought.

One day I wrote her name upon the strand, &  
 But came the waves and washéd it away ; &  
 Again I wrote it with a second hand, &  
 But came the tide and made my pains his prey. &  
 "Vain man," said she, "that dost in vain assay  
 A mortal thing so to immortalize ; &  
 For I myself shall like to this decay,  
 And eke my name be wiped out likewise."  
 "Not so," quoth I ; "let baser things devise  
 To die in dust, but you shall live by fame : &

My verse your virtues rare shall eternize, c  
And in the heavens write your glorious name, d  
Where whenas death shall all the world subdue, .  
Our loves shall live, and later life renew."

A sonnet by Sir Walter Raleigh shows that even men of action wrote sonnets in the "spacious times of great Elizabeth." In a very magnificent manner he dethrones Petrarch and Homer in favor of his friend Edmund Spenser, with perhaps a secondary implied compliment to Queen Elizabeth whom her loyal subjects typified in the *Faerie Queene*.

Methought I saw the grave where Laura lay, a  
Within that temple where the vestal flame, A  
Was wont to burn, and passing by that way .  
To see that buried dust of living fame, A  
Whose tomb fair love and fairer virtue kept, .  
All suddenly I saw the Faery Queen ;  
At whose approach the soul of Petrarch wept ;  
And from thenceforth those Graces were not seen,  
For they this Queen attended ; in whose stead  
Oblivion laid him down on Laura's hearse.  
Hereat the hardest stones were seen to bleed .  
And groans of buried ghosts the heavens did pierce ;  
Where Homer's spright did tremble all for grief,  
And cursed the access of that celestial thief.

This is not a very remarkable sonnet, but a better one than any modern politician soldier could write.

Among the numerous sonnets of ~~this period~~ those by Drummond, Drayton, and Daniel may be instanced. The following by Michael Drayton is in every way admirable and illustrates the importance of dividing the thought logically at the end of the eighth line as Spenser usually does.

Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part,  
 Nay I have done, you get no more of me  
 And I am glad, yea glad with all my heart  
 That thus so cleanly I myself can free:  
 Shake hands forever! cancel all our vows,  
 And, when we meet at any time again,  
 Be it not seen in either of our brows  
 That we one jot of former love retain.

Now at the last gasp of Love's latest breath,  
 When, his pulse failing, Passion speechless lies,  
 When Faith is kneeling by his bed of death,  
 And Innocence is closing up his eyes—  
 Now if thou would'st, when all have given him over,  
 From death to life thou might'st him yet recover.

The genius of the dramatic poet, William Shakespeare, took up the prevalent philosophical thought of the day and molded it into the forms in which the writers of his time expressed themselves. As early as 1598, Francis Meres in a short literary sketch of the period mentions his "suggard sonnets among his private friends." Publication was a very different matter then from what it is now. It was usually effected through the help of a

wealthy or socially powerful noble, a Macænas, to whom the work was dedicated and to whom the writer looked for his "honorarium" either in a gift of money or an appointment to some salaried position in the gift of the patron. Literature received some of the rewards that now go to political services. Chaucer was made collector of customs, and Spenser secretary to the viceroy of Ireland. The two poems Shakespeare wrote for publication are dedicated to powerful noblemen. In 1600, printing establishments were beginning to bring out small ventures on their own account, plays, ballads, and the like in pamphlet form, and to this we owe the quarto editions of about half of Shakespeare's plays. In 1609, Thomas Thorpe, a petty London publisher, got hold of a number of manuscript copies of sonnets by the great dramatist. He printed them and prefixed an enigmatical dedication, the most enigmatical, indeed, that ever prefaced any book:—

THE SONNETS OF SHAKESPEAR,  
TO THE  
ONLIE BEGETTER OF THESE ENSUING SONNETS  
MR. W. H.  
ALL HAPPINESS  
AND THAT ETERNITY  
PROMISED BY OUR EVER-LIVING POET  
WISHETH  
THE WELL-WISHING ADVENTURER  
IN SETTING FORTH.

T. T.

"The ever-living poet" is, of course, Shakespeare, who in several sonnets predicts immortality for the subject of his verse. There seems no reason for imagining that W. H. was the person to whom the author addressed any of the poems, and it cannot reasonably be conjectured who he was. The "onlie begetter" must mean collector, and not inspirer. W. H. must have gathered in some way a number of sonnets by Shakespeare. Possibly he had them on loose leaves, possibly in manuscript books such as were frequently used in that day. They must have been "clean copy," for there are very few typographical errors in the printed page, which makes a remarkable contrast to the folio of Shakespeare's plays. Possibly some of them were in the handwriting of the author, but he evidently had nothing to do with the publication, since the arrangement in groups is very imperfect and is partly intelligent and partly fortuitous. The common law at this time gave the author no control over his matter after the manuscript had left his hands. We have no means of knowing how Shakespeare took the (doubtless) unauthorized printing of his work, and we can only feel thankful to the enterprising and unscrupulous T. T.

The subject-matter of these sonnets has a wide range. The first seventeen are exhortations to a young man to marry, since man's life is short and the race eternal. A number are on the enduring

power of poetry, a theme frequently handled by the poets of the day; others are addressed to a powerful patron; others celebrate love, not necessarily sexual love, but the affinity between twin souls; others lament the on-coming of age and the pathetic transitoriness of things; others are addressed to a woman profoundly attractive but not faithful, or to the friend who has robbed the writer of her affection. Many of them are so subjective and lyrical that it seems impossible to doubt that they are the rehearsing of a mood resulting from personal experience, until we remember that the writer was a great dramatist and possessed the power of imagining in all possible forms the reaction of external circumstance on characters of depth and emotional capacity. Wordsworth said of the sonnets "with this key Shakespeare unlocked his heart," and Browning replied, "Did he? Then the less Shakespeare he." We can deduce no substantial biographical experience from verse in which the poet is playing on the facts of life with a master hand.

Throwing out four or five as possibly commonplace, and admitting that here and there the thought is artificial and the expression exaggerated after the fashion of the day, the sonnets of Shakespeare constitute a great body of poetry. The sonorous volume of sound is in places remarkable, but finer, more delicate harmonies run through nearly all of the lines. Even in the craggy opening,



Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments,

the *m*'s and the abrupt vowels are like a trumpet call, and the beautiful *l* sequence and the *o*'s and *a*'s in the next line, —

Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds  
Or bends with the remover to remove,

answer it like a bugle. Nowhere can more beautiful illustrations of tone-color and of alliteration, not in the initial letters of words only but in the body and substance of the music, be found. The *s*'s followed by *w*'s in the first quatrain of No. 30 are no more than a fair example, for as a rule the music is more subtle : —

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought  
I summon up remembrance of things past,  
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,  
And with old woes new wail my dear times' waste.

The ethical subtlety of the thought, sometimes not to be understood without paraphrasing, but not to be comprehended except in the original form, and the justness of the phrases are no less remarkable than the verbal music of the sonnets. It is impossible to characterize the ballad better than in the line — "The stretched meter of an antique song," or the winter forest better than in the lines : —

. . . those boughs which shake against the cold,  
Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang.

The images are occasionally of great force and suggestiveness, as :—

Like as the waves make toward the pebbled shore,  
So do our minutes hasten to their end,  
Each changing place with that which goes before,  
In sequent toil all forwards do contend.

Or, —

Almost my nature is subdued  
To what it works in, *like the dyer's hand*.

It must be confessed that some of Shakespeare's sonnets are difficult to understand. They deal with very perplexing and obscure matters. They prove, however, that the sonnet's "scanty plot of ground," of whose limits Wordsworth complained, was broad enough for the intimate expression of a great poet. The first of those subjoined is the very apotheosis of the self-abnegation of spiritual love. The second, written as it was by a man in the prime of life, disproves the autobiographic theory.

No longer mourn for me when I am dead  
Than you shall hear the surly sullen bell  
Give warning to the world that I am fled  
From this vile world with vilest worms to dwell.  
Nay, if you read this line remember not  
The hand that writ it ; for I love you so

That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot  
If thinking on me then should make you woe.  
O! if — I say — you look upon this verse  
When I perhaps compounded am with clay  
Do not so much as my poor name rehearse  
But let your love even with my life decay.  
(Lest the wise world should look into your moan,  
And mock you with me after I am gone.

That time of year thou mayst in me behold  
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang  
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,  
Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang.  
In me thou seest the twilight of such day  
As after sunset fadeth in the west,  
Which by and by black night doth take away,  
Death's second self that seals up all in rest.  
In me thou seest the glowing of such fire  
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,  
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,  
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.  
This thou perceivest which makes thy love more strong  
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

✓ John Milton wrote but seventeen sonnets. His knowledge of Italian literature prompted him to use the pure Italian rhyme scheme, but usually he disregarded the rule to make the divisions of the thought correspond to the metrical divisions. His sonnets are the work of a finished artist, and we cannot but regret that he did not find more leisure hours, when he was busily engaged as Latin secre-

tary to the council and chief pamphlet writer for the Commonwealth, for his true work, poetry. One of the following illustrates his vigorous partisanship, and the other his love for social and literary companionship.

ON THE DETRACTION WHICH FOLLOWED MY WRITING  
CERTAIN TREATISES

I did but prompt the age to quit their clogs  
By the known rules of ancient liberty,  
When straight a barbarous noise environs me  
Of owls and cuckoos, asses, apes, and dogs ;  
As when those hinds that were transformed to frogs  
Railed at Latona's twin-born progeny,  
Which after held the sun and moon in fee.  
But this is got by casting pearl to hogs,  
That bawl for freedom in their senseless mood,  
And still revolt when truth would set them free.  
License they mean when they cry liberty ;  
For who loves that must first be wise and good,  
But from that mark how far they rove we see,  
For all this waste of wealth and loss of blood.

TO MR. LAWRENCE

Lawrence, of virtuous father virtuous son,  
Now that the fields are dank and ways are mire,  
Where shall we sometimes meet and by the fire  
Help waste a sullen day, what may be won  
From the hard season gaining? Time will run  
On smoother, till Favonius reinspire  
The frozen earth and clothe in fresh attire

The lily and rose, that neither sowed nor spun.  
What neat repast shall feast us, light and choice,  
Of Attic taste, with wine, whence we may rise  
To hear the lute well touched, or artful voice  
Warble immortal notes and Tuscan air?  
He who of these delights can judge, and spare  
To interpose them oft, is not unwise.

The resemblance to an ode of Horace is evident.

( Milton died in 1674, and for a century thereafter no sonnets were written. Neither the brilliant persiflage of the Restoration nor the serious undertone of the eighteenth century nor its dignified classical culture were favorable to the production of delicate and highly artificial forms of art. Dr. Johnson compared Milton's work on sonnets to that of a man who "carved heads on cherry-stones." Toward the end of the century Thomas Gray (1716-1771), whose conception of art and culture was much finer than that of Dr. Johnson and the prevailing school of writers, wrote sonnets. His example was followed by Thomas Warton (1728-1790), professor of poetry at Oxford, and by Anna Seward (1747-1809), a lady of graceful literary powers. William Lisle Bowles (1762-1850) wrote a number which attracted the attention of Cole-ridge (1772-1834). Younger writers were excited with the idea that verse should be more varied, natural, and musical than that of the stately eighteenth-century school, and the publication of the ancient ballads has widened their conception of the

function of poetry. Coleridge wrote a few sonnets, but he never hit on the true melodic sonnet wave. Wordsworth, however, took up the sonnet form with a fuller comprehension of its nature. He wrote over four hundred sonnets, and though his fatal facility of rhyming makes some of them commonplace, a number are so distinguished by limpidity as to rank among the finest specimens in the language. He was no doubt profoundly influenced by Milton. In most instances he follows pretty closely the pure Italian form, and he must be held to have given the sonnet its great vogue in the nineteenth century. Following the example of the sixteenth-century poets, he composed several "sonnet sequences," the most important of which is that on the ecclesiastical history of England entitled *Ecclesiastical Sketches*, one hundred and fourteen in number. Another series, of thirty-four has for a subject various aspects of the River Duddon in Westmoreland, and another, a trip to Scotland. Sonnets written in such numbers can hardly avoid a mechanical, professional tone. Among the best known of Wordsworth's sonnets are the one written on Westminster Bridge, already cited, the one on Milton, and the one beginning "The world is too much with us"; the ones on Venice, on Toussaint L'Ouverture, and on a "calm evening," but many others are far above mediocrity. In diction all are simple and transparent, and some of the phrases are of admirable force and beauty.

## VENICE

Once did she hold the gorgeous East in fee,  
And was the safeguard of the West; the worth  
Of Venice did not fall below her birth;  
Venice the eldest child of Liberty.  
She was a maiden city, bright and free;  
No guile seduced, no force could violate;  
And when she took unto herself a mate  
She must espouse the Everlasting Sea.  
And what if she had seen those glories fade,  
Those titles vanish and that strength decay,  
Yet shall some tribute of regret be paid  
When her long life hath reached its final day:  
Men are we and must grieve when even the shade  
Of that which once was great is passed away.

## MILTON

Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour;  
England hath need of thee: she is a fen  
Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,  
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,  
Have forfeited their ancient English dower  
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;  
Oh, raise us up, return to us again;  
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.  
Thy soul was like a star and dwelt apart;  
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea;  
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,  
So didst thou travel on life's common way  
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart  
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

## KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL, CAMBRIDGE

Tax not the royal saint with vain expense ;  
 With ill-matched aims, the architect who planned —  
 Albeit laboring for a scanty band  
 Of white-robed scholars only, — this immense  
 And glorious work of fine intelligence.  
 Give all thou canst ; high Heaven rejects the lore  
 Of nicely calculated less or more ;  
 So deemed the man who fashioned for the sense  
 These lofty pillars, spread that branching roof  
 Self-poised and scooped into ten thousand cells  
 Where light and shade repose, where music dwells  
 Lingering, and wandering on as loth to die ;  
 Like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof  
 That they were born for immortality.

— *Ecclesiastical Sketches.*

## PLACES OF WORSHIP

As star that shines dependent upon star  
 Is to the sky while we look up in love ;  
 As to the deep, fair ships, which, though they move,  
 Seem fixed to eyes that watch them from afar ;  
 As to the sandy desert fountains are,  
 With palm groves shaded at wide intervals,  
 Whose fruit around the sun-burnt native falls,  
 Of roving tired or desultory war ;  
 Such to this British isle her Christian fanes,  
 Each linked to each for kindred services ;  
 Her spires, her steeple-towers with glittering vanes  
 Far-kenned, her chapels lurking among trees

FORMS OF ENG. POETRY — 9





Where a few villagers on bended knees  
Find solace which a busy world disdains.  
— *Ecclesiastical Sketches.*

It will be observed that Wordsworth very rarely closes the sonnet with a couplet and that he occasionally inserts an extra rhyme into the octave as in three of those quoted. He observes the thought division in more than half of his sonnets as in all of the above. The thought division is evidently more important than the metrical requirement, but few will be inclined to find fault with the sonnet on *King's College Chapel* though it contains both defects: the second rhyme is not carried through the octave, and the logical division falls at the end of the fifth line. Technical rules are relaxed for those whose abilities are not limited to obedience.

Among Wordsworth's immediate successors, Byron and Shelley made few essays in the sonnet although masters of the Spenserian stanza, a form kindred to it. That their vigorous and generous sentiments would not have been cramped by its formality is shown by Byron's sonnet on Chillon :—

Eternal spirit of the chainless mind,  
Brightest in dungeons, Liberty, thou art,  
For there thy habitation is the heart,  
The heart which love of thee alone can bind ;  
And when thy sons to fetters are consigned, —  
To fetters and the damp vault's dayless gloom,  
Their country conquers with their martyrdom,  
And Freedom's fame finds wings on every wind.

Chillon ; thy prison is a holy place,  
 And thy sad floor an altar, for 'twas trod,  
 Until his very steps have left a trace  
 Worn as if thy cold pavement were a sod  
 By Bonnivard ! May none those marks efface,  
 For they appeal from tyranny to God.

Shelley's fourteen-line poem, *Ozymandias*, violates all the laws of the sonnet except the first. It contains a magnificent image, but on reading it, the fall of the rhymes will be found disappointing, showing that there is something absolute in the regular form.

## OZYMANDIAS

I met a traveler from an antique land  
 Who said, " Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
 Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand  
 Half sunk, a shattered visage lies whose frown  
 And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command  
 Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
 Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,  
 The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed ;  
 And on the pedestal these words appear :  
 ' My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings ;  
 Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair ! '  
 Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
 Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,  
 The lone and level sands stretch far away."

John Keats had all the requirements of a sonnet writer : passionate love of melody and beauty, a sense of form which strengthened with each suc-

cessive production, and the power of striking out the fitting and suggestive phrase which grips the reader and seems something absolute and final. His sonnets must be regarded as preludes to a life work which his genius was not allowed to finish. The first of the two following is evidently youthful work :—

WRITTEN ON THE DAY MR. LEIGH HUNT LEFT PRISON

What though for showing truth to flattered state  
 Kind Hunt was shut in prison, yet has he  
 In his immortal spirit been as free  
 As the sky-searching lark, and as elate.  
 Minion of grandeur ! think you he did wait ?  
 Think you he naught but prison walls did see  
 Till so unwilling thou unturn'd'st the key ?  
 Ah no ! far happier, nobler was his fate !

In Spenser's halls he strayed, and bowers fair,  
 Culling enchanted flowers ; and he flew  
 With daring Milton through the fields of air ;  
 To regions of his own his genius true  
 Took happy flights. Who shall his fame impair  
 When thou art dead and all thy wretched crew

How many bards gild the lapses of time !  
 A few of them have ever been the food  
 Of my delighted fancy — I could brood  
 Over their beauties, earthly or sublime ;  
 And often when I sit me down to rhyme,  
 These will in throngs before my mind intrude,

But no confusion, no disturbance rude  
Do they occasion ; 'tis a pleasing chime.

So the unnumbered sounds that evening store,  
The song of birds, — the whispering of the leaves,  
The voice of waters — the great bell that heaves  
With solemn sound — and thousand others more,  
That distance of recognisance bereaves,  
Make pleasing music and not wild uproar.

The first line of the last of the two is not a sonnet line, and at least two others are harsh. It is not enough that all contain ten syllables.

Robert Browning and Alfred Tennyson wrote very few sonnets. Both liked to compose on a larger scale than its limits permit, possibly they did not like the restraint it imposes ; at all events when they cut cameos they originated the pattern. Both were lyrical poets, and the sonnet is a fitter embodiment of reflection than of subjective emotion. Still, Mrs. Browning is as decidedly lyrical as are the two great poets of the nineteenth century and she used the sonnet form for the outpouring of personal feeling. Mr. Stedman says (*Victorian Poets*, p. 137): "I am disposed to consider the *Sonnets from the Portuguese* as, if not the finest, a portion of the finest subjective poetry in our literature. Their form reminds one of an English prototype, and it is no sacrilege to say that their music is showered from a higher and purer atmosphere than that of the 'Swan of Avon.'" Mrs. Brown-

ing used the expression "From the Portuguese" to disguise, as if translations, the poems in which she embodied the exalted mood of a refined woman to whom the passion of love came for the first time after youth was past. The passion is so pure that it seems disembodied. It is of the soul, ecstatic, or standing out of the body. The range of emotion of these sonnets is limited and feminine. Not only does Shakespeare cover a wider scope of sentiment in his love sonnets, but he stands on the border between the two worlds of sense and spirit as man does, and in consequence his sentiment is juster and more universal. The ethereal medium of the ideal world may be "purer" than the sin-laden atmosphere of reality in one sense and "higher" in one sense, but the clouds and storms of this earth are to us of more interest than the serener sky of an imagined heaven, and properer subjects of art. Having said this, we admit the spiritual and artistic beauty of Mrs. Browning's sonnets and that they are showered from an atmosphere "higher and purer in the conventional sense" than those of the "Swan of Avon." She herself would have been the last to claim for them the reach, elevation, and insight or the phrase power of the Shakespearean sonnets.

The *Sonnets from the Portuguese* number forty-four. The sonnets of Mrs. Browning are almost invariably subjective and many of them are marked by a profound religious feeling. Technically, Mrs.

Browning was a careless artist, or, rather, she cared for expression more than for form. She does not regard the division between the octave and the sextette sufficiently to bring out the full beauty of the sonnet structure, nor will she ever reject a rhyme because it is imperfect. The beauty of her poetry is largely phrasal and rhythmical, and, in the fuller but not in the formal sense, structural. Of the *Sonnets from the Portuguese* perhaps the most characteristic one is the twenty-second:—

When our two souls stand up erect and strong,  
 Face to face, silent; drawing nigh and nigher,  
 Until the lengthening wings break into fire  
 At either curved point—what bitter wrong  
 Can the earth do to us that we should not long  
 Be here contented? Think! In mounting higher  
 The angels would press on us and aspire  
 To drop some golden orb of perfect song  
 Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay  
 Rather on Earth, Beloved,—where the unfit  
 Contrarious moods of men recoil away  
 And isolate pure spirits, and permit  
 A place to stand and love in for a day  
 With darkness and the death-hour rounding it.

The close of this is undoubtedly very beautiful, and the tone of the poem is spiritual and elevated.

Of the other sonnets of Mrs. Browning, some thirty in number, we transcribe as an example of her religious sentiment, the one entitled the *Two Sayings*:—

Two sayings of the Holy Scriptures beat

Like pulses in the Church's brow and breast ;

And by them we find rest in our unrest,

And heart deep in salt tears do yet entreat

God's fellowship as if on Heavenly seat.

The first is "Jesus wept," — whereon is prest

Full many a sobbing face, that drops its best

And sweetest waters on the record sweet : —

And one is where the Christ, denied and scorned,

"Looked upon Peter." Oh, to render plain

By help of having loved a little and mourned

That look of sovran love and sovran pain

Which He who could not sin, yet suffered, turned

On him who could reject but not sustain.

The poet-painter, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, wrote one hundred and fifty sonnets. As he was quite as much at home in the Italian language and literature as in English, and was, in common with his friends of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, enthusiastic over the art of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, it was natural that he should cultivate the measures of Dante and Petrarch. He obeys the Italian rules, making, except in one instance, a full stop at the end of the eighth line and separating the octave and the sextette by a space on the page. Often he obeys the subordinate rule to divide the octave into two quatrains and the sextette into two terzettes by a period. He never closes a sonnet with a couplet. Pains-taking, loving workmanship as if on the cutting of a gem is evident in the phrasing.

A sequence of one hundred is called *House of Life*. A number of these written in a small parchment book were buried with his young wife, who had been their inspiration, and seven years later exhumed with his consent. In these the conception of the passion of love is marked by spiritual intensity colored by an artistic deification of the human form. They are like nothing else in English literature. They are poems of a mood not altogether germane to the Anglo-Saxon mind; infinity, mystery, and eternity are nobly and poetically conceived, but in a way to which we are unaccustomed. The presentation would have appealed more readily to Dante and his circle than it does to us.

Of the other sonnets of this poet many refer to pictures. Indeed, the standpoint of the pictorial artist is evident in all of Rossetti's work, but it is usually that of the artist interested in humanity as it existed seven centuries ago and especially as it was reflected in minds of an exalted and mystical type. Unless we know something of the picture referred to we must construct an image of it from the sonnet and then interpret the sonnet from our image of the picture. Combined with remoteness in the allusions, delicacy in the thought connections, and obscurity in the style, this reference to an unknown painting makes some of Rossetti's sonnets obscure. They are always beautiful and remotely suggestive, some of the images and phrases are of great power and the music is a strain of peremptory



sonorousness that emphasizes the loftiness of the idea. The following magnificent one is incomprehensible without a visual image of the picture in question. The first three lines are unsurpassable.

FOR "OUR LADY OF THE ROCKS"

(*by Leonardo da Vinci*)

Mother, is this the darkness of the end,  
The Shadow of Death? and is that outer sea  
Infinite, imminent eternity?  
And does the death-pang by man's seed sustained  
In Time's each instant cause thy face to bend  
Its silent prayer upon the Son, while he  
Blesses the dead with his hand silently,  
To His long day which hours no more offend?

Mother of grace, the pass is difficult,  
Keen as these rocks, and the bewildered souls  
Throng it like echoes blindly shuddering through.  
Thy name, O Lord, each spirit's voice extols  
Whose peace abides in the dark avenue  
Amid the bitterness of things occult.

THE BIRTH BOND

Have you not noted in some family  
Where two were born of a first marriage bed,  
How still they own their gracious bond though fed  
And nursed on the forgotten breast and knee?  
How to their father's children they shall be  
In act and thought of one good will; but each

Shall for the other have in silence, speech,  
And in a word, complete community.

Even so when first I saw you seemed it love,  
That among souls allied to mine was yet  
One nearer kindred than life hinted of.  
O born with me somewhere that men forget,  
And though for years of sight and sound unmet,  
Known for my soul's birth partner well enough !

— *House of Life*.

Both of these are weakened by the closing line, and the second is one of the very rare instances when Rossetti uses the third rhyme in the octave.

#### THE DARK GLASS

Not I myself know all my love for thee :  
How should I reach so far, who cannot weigh  
To-morrow's dower by gage of yesterday ?  
Shall birth and death and all dark names that be  
As doors and windows bared to some loud sea  
Lash deaf mine ears and blind my face with spray ;  
And shall my sense pierce love, — the last relay  
And ultimate outpost of Eternity ?

Lo ! what am I to love, the lord of all ?  
One murmuring shell he gathers from the sand,  
One little heart-flame sheltered in his hand.  
Yet through thine eyes he grants me clearest call  
And veriest touch of powers primordial  
That any hour-girt life may understand.

— *House of Life*.

The following sonnet will repay study, and the close of the octave is an example of Rossetti's occasional great phrasal power.

### THINK AND ACT

Think thou and act; to-morrow thou shalt die.  
 Outstretched in the sun's warmth upon the shore  
 Thou sayst, "Man's measured path is all gone o'er;  
 Up all his years, steeply, with strain and sigh  
 Man clomb until he touched the truth; and I  
 Even I am he whom it was destined for."  
 How should this be? Art thou then so much more  
 Than they who sowed that thou shouldst reap thereby?

Nay, come up hither. From this wave-washed mound  
 Unto the furthest flood-brim look with me;  
 Then reach on with thy thought till it be drowned,  
 Miles and miles distant though the last line be,  
 And though thy soul sail leagues and leagues beyond,  
 Still, leagues beyond those leagues there is more sea.

The implied contrast between the man comfortable at the sea-level of thought, who thinks that the present is the heir of the past and has reached the absolute goal, and so takes his ease, and the speaker, who from a slight eminence looks out on the illimitable area of the future soul development of the race, is of far-reaching significance. In the following the evil effect of the growth of modern individualism in chilling generous sentiment is

forcibly presented, far more so than it could be in a prose essay : —

ON REFUSAL OF AID BETWEEN NATIONS

Not that the earth is changing, O my God !  
Not that the seasons totter in their walk —  
Not that the virulent ill of act and talk  
Seethes ever as a wine press ever trod —  
Not therefore are we certain that the rod  
Weighs in thine hand to smite thy world ; though now  
Beneath thine hand so many nations bow,  
So many kings : — not therefore, O my God !

But because Man is parceled out in men  
To-day ; because for any wrongful blow  
No man not stricken asks, “ I would be told  
Why thou dost this ; ” but this heart whispers then,  
“ He is he, I am I.” By this we know  
That our earth falls asunder, being old.

In our country the sonnet has been since the beginning of the nineteenth century one of the recognized forms for the poetry of reflection. Longfellow wrote less than fifty, all of them marked by artistic finish and grace rather than by passionate energy. In construction and thought they are easily comprehensible like those of Wordsworth, not involved and allusive like those of Rossetti. Those entitled *Three Friends of Mine* overflow with manly tenderness and are perfect in sentiment and expression.

## TO AGASSIZ

I stand again on the familiar shore  
And hear the waves of the distracted sea  
Piteously calling and lamenting thee,  
And waiting restless at thy cottage door.  
The rocks, the seaweed on the ocean floor,  
The willows in the meadow, and the free  
Wild winds of the Atlantic welcome me;  
Then why shouldst thou be dead and come no more?

Ah, why shouldst thou be dead when common men  
Are busy with their trivial affairs,  
Having and holding? Why, when thou hadst read  
Nature's mysterious manuscript, and then  
Wast ready to reveal the truth it bears,  
Why art thou silent? Why shouldst thou be dead?

The following, too, beautifully embodies emotion which lies within the experience of every one:—

## THE NAMELESS GRAVE

A soldier of the Union mustered out,  
Is the inscription on an unknown grave  
At Newport News beside the salt-sea wave,  
Nameless and dateless; sentinel or scout  
Shot down in skirmish, or disastrous rout  
Of battle, when the loud artillery drave  
Its iron wedges through the ranks of brave  
And doomed battalions storming the redoubt.

Thou unknown hero sleeping by the sea  
In thy forgotten grave; with secret shame

I feel my pulses beat, my forehead burn  
When I remember thou hast given for me  
All that thou hadst, thy life, thy very name,  
And I can give thee nothing in return.

Among those of more recent writers the sonnets of Edith Thomas, Emma Lazarus, and Lloyd Mifflin are especially noteworthy. There are many other sporadic sonnets of admirable quality scattered here and there in our literature. The few of Parsons make us regret that the author did not more frequently essay this difficult form. The modern tendency to avoid sonorousness and volume of sound, to repress the force of the accent beat in any one line, to reduce poetic diction to the simplicity of prose, and to keep emotional expression within decorous, conventional bounds seems to prevent the production of sonnets of the highest class. The sonnet is well adapted to the presentation of two related thoughts, whether the relation be that of contrast or of parallelism, but it is so short that the body of thought must be very condensed and striking, lucidly presented and yet of far-reaching suggestiveness. The technical difficulties of the form are also very great, which, indeed, makes the perfect ones the more satisfying. Sonnet beauty depends on symmetry and asymmetry both, for the parts are unequal in length and different in form and melody. In this it resembles things of organic beauty as opposed to things of geometric

beauty. It involves the principle of balanced yet dissimilar masses, of formality and freedom, like a tree which has developed under the rigorous law of its growth and yet is shaped by the chance of wind and sunshine into something individual. The sonnet form could not have endured the test of time for so many years did it not embody some of the underlying principles of beauty.

The following sonnets on the sonnet will show how it has been regarded by three poets :—

Scorn not the sonnet ; Critic, you have frowned  
 Mindless of its just honors ; with this key  
 Shakespeare unlocked his heart ; the melody  
 Of this small lute gave ease to Petrarch's wound ;  
 A thousand times this pipe did Tasso sound ;  
 With it Camoëns soothed an exile's grief ;  
 The sonnet glittered, a gay myrtle leaf  
 Amid the cypress with which Dante crowned  
 His visionary brow ; a glow-worm lamp  
 It cheered mild Spenser, called from Faery-land  
 To struggle through dark ways ; and when a damp  
 Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand  
 The thing became a trumpet, whence he blew  
 Soul-animating strains — alas too few.

— WORDSWORTH.

A sonnet is a moment's monument, —  
 Memorial from the soul's eternity  
 To one dead deathless hour. Look that it be  
 Whether for lustral rite or dire portent  
 Of its own arduous fullness reverent ;

Carve it in ivory or in ebony  
As Day or Night may rule ; and let Time see  
Its flowering crest impearled and orient.

A sonnet is a coin : its face reveals  
The soul — its converse to what Power 'tis due,  
Whether for tribute to the august appeals  
Of Life, or dower in Love's high retinue,  
It serve ; or mid the dark wharf's cavernous breath,  
In Charon's palm it pay the toll to death.

— ROSSETTI.

#### THE SONNET'S VOICE

Yon silvery billows breaking on the beach  
Fall back in foam beneath the star-shine clear,  
The while my rhymes are murmuring in your ear  
A restless lore like that the billows teach ;  
For on these sonnet-waves my soul would reach  
From its own depths, and rest within you, dear,  
As, through the billowy voices yearning here,  
Great nature strives to find a human speech.

A sonnet is a wave of melody ;  
From heaving waters of the impassioned soul  
A billow of tidal music one and whole  
Flows in the "octave," then returning free  
Its ebbing surges in the "sestet" roll  
Back to the deeps of life's tumultuous sea.

— THEODORE WATTS.

BOOKS ON THE SONNET: *Book of the Sonnet*, 2 vols., Leigh Hunt; *Sonnets of the Century*, with critical introduction by William Sharp; *Three Hundred English Sonnets*, D. M. Mann; *A Treasury of Sonnets*, D. M. Mann.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE ODE

THE ballad is a popular form, a medieval heritage; the sonnet belongs to the poetry of culture, is of Italian origin, and a part of the fruit of the English renaissance of the sixteenth century. The English ode though having also an Italian root is primarily a revival of a classic form of verse. It dates from the seventeenth century though the Italian canzone had been used as a model by Spenser at a slightly earlier period. The word "ode," derived from the Greek word meaning a song, has something of the indefinite range of meaning that attaches to the word "ballad." It covers: first, lyrics of some dignity and length intended to be sung by a trained chorus, like Dryden's *Ode on St. Cecilia's Day*, and *Alexander's Feast*, or Sidney Lanier's ode on the opening of the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia; second, poems read at some important occasion but not intended to be sung, like Lowell's *Commemoration Ode*; third, poems intended to be read in private, like Wordsworth's *Ode to Duty*, or Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale*. We also speak habitually of the

*Odes of Horace*, though his *Carmina*, with the exception of the *Carmen Seculare*, were not written for a chorus of singers and are largely of the nature of society verse. In the same way we speak of the *Odes of Anacreon*, though these are clearly songs and intended for the single voice. Taking these two last usages as exceptional and traditional, there are nevertheless some common characteristics in the three first mentioned classes. Mr. Gosse says (*English Odes*, Introduction, p. 12), "We take as an ode any strain of enthusiastic and exalted lyrical verse, directed to a fixed purpose and dealing progressively with one dignified theme." The definition, though wordy and not insisting on any one mark as absolutely requisite, is perhaps as good a one as can be found, though it would seem to apply to good odes rather than to the species in general. It leaves the question open whether some of the requirements cannot be wanting and yet the production fall within the category, and it does not notice the specialized uses of the word, as in the "Horatian ode." But it will aid us in forming, from the examination of specimens, a conception of the content of the term and of the difference between its generalized and its specialized uses.

The ode, then, deals with a "theme." It is not narration, but poetical exposition, and if some narrative is found in it, the story serves as the basis for exhortation or reflection; it is not brought in for

its proper interest. The theme is "dignified," therefore the tone is serious. It deals "progressively," therefore an ode must have some extension, otherwise it is a song or a bit of verse. It is a "strain," therefore a lyrical unity not made up of chapters on different parts of the theme and not of excessive length. It is "exalted" and "enthusiastic," not didactic — a poetic oration rather than an essay in verse. It is "lyrical"; that is, adapted to singing or oral recitation. It is "directed to a fixed purpose," not made of wandering or semi-detached reflections. All the essential characteristics are summed up when we say that an ode is a dignified lyric of some length. The elegy or funeral ode must be excluded unless the treatment is encomiastic, not elegiac. Tennyson's *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* is encomiastic. Laments cannot well be enthusiastic, and funeral odes, if laments, come under the head of threnodies or dirges. Gray's *Elegy written in a Country Churchyard* would be excluded from the list of odes as general reflections, depressed rather than "exalted," on the transitoriness of things, and as not lyrical in tone. A poet has a right to assign his production to any class he likes, otherwise we might doubt whether Keats's beautiful *Ode on a Grecian Urn* was not too reflective and pathetic for a true ode. It has too much the romantic color. Wordsworth's ode on the *Intimations of Immortality* is "exalted," and is

rightly termed an ode because it appeals to a general sentiment of the human race, and not to so delicate a development of our psychical organism as does the ode of Keats. There should be some massiveness and robustness of thought to merit treatment in an ode.

As said before, the Greeks called all lyric poems odes, and included in the term poems as different as the drinking songs of Anacreon and the love songs of Sappho on the one hand, and on the other the enthusiastic choral compositions of Pindar written to celebrate the victory of some athlete in the national games. It is the general form and spirit of these last which have determined the character of the modern ode. Nevertheless, the Italians of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries developed a form of verse consisting of several stanzas of considerable length — at least eleven lines — with lines of different numbers of feet arranged as to rhymes and position according to a formula varying in different poems but uniform for each one. This was called a canzone or ode. Italian literary art was much admired by English writers in the sixteenth century, — we have already seen how the sonnet form was imported by Surrey and Wyatt, — and the Italian ode or canzone has been one of the determining influences in the development of the English ode, an earlier though less powerful one than the Pindaric ode. Spenser's *Epithalamion* or marriage hymn is in twenty-three stanzas mostly of

sixteen or seventeen lines each with a refrain of two lines. A short envoi or stanza of seven lines closes the poem. The stanzas are all on nearly the same model, and in this and the presence of the refrain the poem is un-Pindaric in form. It is full of the fervor of the early Renaissance and must be referred partly to Latin and partly to Italian originals. This ode, the first in the English language, was unequaled among marriage hymns in beauty and delicacy of expression till Tennyson wrote the marriage song in *In Memoriam*. The eleventh and two following stanzas give an idea of the form and lyrical quality of the whole. Very great technical skill is implied in making so complicated a meter seem unaffected.

## XI

But if ye saw that which no eyes can see,  
The inward beauty of her lively spright  
Garnisht with heavenly gifts of high degree,  
Much more then would ye wonder at that sight  
And stand astonisht like to those which red  
Medusa's mazeful head.  
There dwells sweet love and constant chastity,  
Unspotted faith and comely womanhood,  
Regard of honor and mild modesty,  
There virtue reigns as queen in royal throne,  
And giveth laws alone,  
The which the base affections do obey,  
And yield their services unto her will;  
Ne thought of thing uncomely ever may

Thereto approach to tempt her mind to ill.  
Had ye once seen these, her celestial treasures  
And unrevealed pleasures,  
Then would ye wonder and her praises sing  
That all the woods should answer and your echo ring.

## XII

Open the temple gates unto my love ;  
Open them wide that she may enter in ;  
And all the posts adorn as doth behove,  
And all the pillars deck with girlands trim,  
For to receive this saint with honor due  
That cometh in to you.  
With trembling steps, and humble reverence,  
She cometh in before th' Almighty's view.  
Of her, ye virgins, learn obedience,  
Whenso ye come into those holy places,  
To humble your proud faces.  
Bring her up to th' high altar, that she may  
The sacred ceremonies there partake  
The which do endless matrimony make ;  
And let the roaring organs loudly play  
The praises of the Lord in lively notes  
The whiles with hollow throats,  
The choristers the joyous anthem sing,  
That all the woods may answer and their echo ring.

## XIII

Behold while she before the altar stands,  
Hearing the holy priest that to her speaks,  
And blesseth her with his two happy hands,  
How the red roses flush up in her cheeks,

And the pure snow, with goodly vermeil stain,  
Like crimson dyed in grain ;

That even the angels which continually  
About the sacred altar do remain,

Forget their service and about her fly,  
Oft peeping in her face, that seems more fair  
The more they on it stare.

But her sad eyes, still fastened on the ground,  
Are governed with goodly modesty

That suffers not one look to glance awry,  
Which may let in a little thought unsound.

Why blush ye, love, to give to me your hand  
The pledge of all our band ?

Sing, ye sweet angels, Alleluia sing !

That all the woods may answer and your echo ring.

In 1629, Ben Jonson wrote an ode in the Horatian manner on the failure of his comedy *The New Inn*, which he says was "never played but most negligently acted." It is addressed "to himself," and is made up of six stanzas of ten lines with adjacent rhymes. It is vigorous and ingeniously constructed, but is hardly long enough, nor is the subject of sufficient dignity, to entitle it strictly to the name of ode except in the Horatian sense. The first stanza runs : —

#### TO HIMSELF

Come leave the loathed stage  
And the more loathsome age,  
Where pride and impudence in faction knit,  
Usurp the chair of wit ;

Indicting and arraigning every day  
Something they call a play.  
Let their fastidious, vain  
Commission of the brain  
Run on and rage, sweat, censure and condemn ;  
They were not made for thee, less thou for them.

Milton's *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, written in his twenty-first year, is rightly an ode by reason of its lyrical quality and the elevation of the style. It opens with four of the well-known seven-line stanzas such as Chaucer uses in *Troilus and Criseyde*. The "Hymn" of twenty-seven eight-line stanzas follows. The only fault that can be found with it is that it ends rather abruptly. Milton's great poem *Lycidas* might be considered a funeral ode, but it is more consonant with the definition we have assumed to classify it as a dirge or lament. Edmund Waller's *Panegyric to the Lord Protector*, and his verses on King Charles II's *Happy Return* are entitled by him "Epistles," though the first, at least, has some of the characteristics of an ode. Andrew Marvel's poem *Upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland* has sufficient lyrical vigor and elevation to be called an ode. It contains the well-known reference to the execution of Charles I :—

He nothing common did or mean  
Upon that memorable scene,  
But with his keener eye  
The axe's edge did try ;



Nor called the gods with vulgar spite  
To vindicate his helpless right ;  
But bowed his comely head  
Down as upon a bed.

Up to this time odes had been written in regular though complicated stanzas, but with the restoration a form was introduced which was used exclusively for half a century, and has ever since had great influence on the form of the ode and, through it, on minor verse. It originated in a mistaken conception of the construction of the Greek ode. About the middle of the seventeenth century, the scholar, poet, and loyalist, Abraham Cowley, who had followed the fortunes of the widow of Charles I and her son, afterwards Charles II, in France, came across a copy of the odes of the Greek Pindar, apparently not divided into the regular stanzas; strophe, antistrophe, and epode. At all events, he overlooked the fact that he had before him one of the most rigorously exact forms of verse ever written. Of the first three stanzas in a typical ode of Pindar the last is different from the first two in measure and rhythm, and corresponds to a different musical accompaniment, and in many cases to an intricate evolution of the chorus or of separate groups of the singers, but in the succeeding groups of three the forms of the first are repeated. This combined dance, singing, and music must have harmonized into a beautiful art form now entirely

lost, though sometimes remotely suggested on the operatic stage. Cowley was much impressed with the fire and rush of the verse of Pindar, and undertook to imitate it in English. He wrote a number of odes in what he supposed was the Pindaric manner; that is to say, with stanzas of unequal lengths consisting of long and short lines in fortuitous succession, and rhymes where they conveniently fell. This constitutes the irregular form which has been mentioned before. Absolute similarity of parts is not necessary to fine poetry, and when the lines are varied either in length or rhythm so as to increase the force with which the idea is borne on the mind, when metrical changes correspond to and reënforce the thought movement, as they do for the most part in Wordsworth's ode on the *Intimations of Immortality*, or Tennyson's *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*, irregular meter is a legitimate and effective form. Again, where the phrases are very powerful, formal symmetry may be dispensed with. But it requires a very delicate ear like that of Milton or Coleridge to modulate lawless or irregular verse, and even in *Lycidas* and *Christabel* or *Kubla Khan* the irregularities are but slight variations from a fixed norm. Most verse writers, however, need a formula to guide them, and find it safest to imitate a model which experience has tested, and therefore of the hundred or so odes between Cowley and Wordsworth written in irregular meter, all but two

or three are extremely uninteresting and unmusical. It is possible, of course, that they would have been no less so had they been written in strictest form, but then they would at least have been legitimate. Cowley is spoken of by Sir John Denham as "wearing the garb but not the clothes of the ancients," that is, as catching the spirit but not using the form of Pindar, which is precisely what he did not do, since he attempted to imitate the form and succeeded in hitting neither the form nor the spirit of the Greek poet. Sir John says of Cowley that —

Horace's wit and Virgil's state  
He did not steal but emulate ;  
And when he would like them appear,  
Their garb but not their clothes did wear.  
He not from Rome alone, but Greece,  
Like Jason, brought the golden fleece :  
To him that language — though to none  
Of th' others — as his own was known.  
On a stiff gale — as Flaccus sings  
The Theban swan extends his wings,  
When through th' ethereal cloud he flies ;  
To the same pitch our swan doth rise.  
Old Pindar's flights by him are reached,  
When on that gale his wings are stretched.

Obituary notices are perhaps not to be taken very literally, especially when in verse, but if Cowley did "know Greek as his own language," it is one of the strangest things in literary history that he should have taken finely wrought and pre-

cisely constructed odes as a model for irregular verse. The first of Cowley's "Pindaric" odes is a loose translation or imitation of the second Olympic ode of his original.

Queen of all harmonious things,  
Dancing words and speaking strings,  
What god, what hero, wilt thou sing?  
What happy man to equal glories bring?  
Begin, begin thy noble choice,  
And let the hills around reflect the image of thy voice.  
Pisa does to Jove belong,  
Jove and Pisa claim thy song.  
The fair first-fruits of war, the Olympic games,  
Alcides offered up to Jove;  
Alcides, too, thy strings may move,  
But, oh! What man to join with these can worthy  
    prove?  
Join Theron boldly to their sacred names;  
Theron, the next honor claims;  
Theron to no man gives place,  
Is first in Pisa's and in Virtue's race,  
Theron then, and he alone,  
Even his own swift forefathers has outgone.

The entire ode consists of eleven stanzas ranging from thirteen to twenty-two lines in length. But it is not so much this asymmetry as the fact that the long and short lines do not correspond to any change in the emotional stress and produce no legitimate musical effect that renders the poem unpoetical. It sounds as if the function of rhyme was

vastly overestimated by the writer. However, the form, or rather the formlessness, was new and became very popular, partly no doubt because it was easy. It is unnecessary to cite the "Pindarique odes" of the official poets laureate of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, because they are worthless. John Dryden, toward the close of the seventeenth century, paraphrased the twenty-ninth ode of the first book of Horace in "Pindaric verse." His work is less rambling in construction than Cowley's and the short lines fall more naturally in their places. The poem contains, however, the extraordinary allusion to Sirius — the Dog Star : —

The sun is in the Lion mounted high,  
The Syrian Star  
*Barks from afar,*  
And with his sultry breath infects the sky.

Dryden's ode for St. Cecilia's Day is, however, an admirable ode and well adapted to be set to music. *Alexander's Feast*, also, shows that a master can produce a unified poem in the irregular form and make the divergencies add greatly to the musical effect. It is an ode in the fullest sense and the first fine poem of considerable length in the language not written in uniform stanzas. Scholars soon perceived that the distinguishing characteristics of the so-called Pindaric ode were not to be found in the original. In 1701, William Con-

greve the dramatist, who had already produced a *Hymn to St. Cecilia* in close imitation of Dryden, wrote an ode on the victories of the Duke of Marlborough to which he prefixed a *Discourse on the Pindaric Ode*. He says: "There is nothing more frequent among us than a sort of poems intituled Pindaric Odes, pretending to be written in imitation of the style and manner of Pindar, and yet I do not know that there is to this day extant in our language one ode contrived after his model. . . . There is nothing more regular than the odes of Pindar. . . . The liberty which he took in his numbers and which has been so misunderstood and misapplied by his pretended imitators was only in varying the stanzas in different odes, but in each particular ode they are ever correspondent one to another in their turns. . . . They were sung by a chorus, and adapted to the lyre and sometimes to the lyre and pipe; the first was called the strophe, from the version or circular motion of the singers in that stanza from the right hand to the left. The second stanza was called the antistrophe, from the controversion of the chorus. . . . The third stanza was called the epode, which they sung in the middle neither turning to one hand nor the other. . . . The poet having made choice of a certain number of verses to constitute his strophe or first stanza was obliged to observe the same in his antistrophe or second stanza, and which accordingly agreed, whenever repeated, both in

number of verses and quantity of feet; he was then again at liberty to make a new choice for his third stanza or epode. . . . Every epode in the same ode is eternally the same in measure and quantity in respect to itself, as is also every strophe and antistrophe in respect to each other. . . . However, though there be no necessity that our triumphal odes should consist of the three aforementioned stanzas, yet if the reader can observe that the great variation of the numbers in the third stanza has a pleasing effect in the ode, I cannot see why some use may not be made of Pindar's example to the great improvement of the English ode. . . . There is certainly a pleasure in beholding anything that has art and difficulty in the contriving, especially if it appears so carefully executed that the difficulty does not show itself till it is sought for. . . . Nothing can be called beautiful without proportion. When symmetry and harmony are wanting neither the eye nor the ear can be pleased. Therefore, certainly, poetry should not be destitute of them; and of all poetry especially the ode, whose end and essence is harmony. . . . I must beg leave to add that I believe those irregular odes of Mr. Cowley may have been the principal though innocent cause of so many deformed poems since. . . . For my own part I frankly own my error in having hitherto miscalled a few irregular stanzas a Pindaric ode, and possibly if others, who have been under

the same mistake would ingenuously confess the truth, they might own that never having consulted Pindar himself, they took all his irregularity upon trust and finding their account in the great ease with which they could produce odes without being obliged either to measure or design, remained satisfied."

Congreve wrote the ode of nine stanzas before referred to, and another of twelve stanzas with strict regard to Pindaric symmetry, but it is difficult to see that he has any advantage over Cowley except in mechanical regularity. He overlooks the fact that irregularity of form in line or stanza is justified only if it correspond to change in emotional excitement so that the meter may reflect the sentiment. Since Cowley's time, some great poems have been written in irregular stanzas. This is true not only of choral odes for great occasions but of many shorter poems. The first, indeed, might be traced to the influence of the sacred oratorio as well as to that of Cowley's mistaken imitations. But such irregular odes as Wordsworth's *Intimations of Immortality* and Lowell's *Commemoration Ode* must be credited to literary traditions.

William Collins is a more important figure in the history of literature than in literature itself. He and Thomas Gray kept alive the traditions of lyrical verse and romantic treatment in the eighteenth century at a period when the trend of poetry was toward the academic and scholarly, and away from



the imaginative and musical. His verse, it is true, is rather hard and metallic in tone, and his conception of an ode was so elastic that he prefixes the title to a poem shorter than a sonnet. Some of his odes are in regular and some in irregular verse. He divides his *Ode to Liberty* into strophe, epode, antistrophe, second epode, using the Greek terms without any reference to structural significance. His *Ode to Evening* is in unrhymed quatrains and his *Passions, an Ode for Music*, is in irregular rhyme. All of them are addresses and are full of vigor. The address implies personification of the subject, and, unless the subject is unpretentious as in Burns's *Field Mouse* and *Mountain Daisy*, compels the directness and force that is properly characteristic of the ode. The poems which Collins so designates are, therefore, odes in the important matter of spirit and tone, though they are so lawless in form, and their free and ringing, if rather harsh, music is in a remote sense the precursor of the odes of the early nineteenth century. The odes of his contemporary Akenside, written in regular stanzas, one of them in Spenserians, are odes in the sense of Horace's *Carmina*, and most of them familiar verse on everyday subjects. One is a *Remonstrance supposed to have been spoken by Shakespeare when French comedians were acting by subscription at the Theatre Royal*. No subject could be more unodelike.

Thomas Gray, Greek scholar and poet, under-

stood the meters of Pindar as exactly as any one could at that time. In the year 1775, he completed an elaborate lyric called *The Progress of Poesy*. This poem consists of nine stanzas divided into three groups of three stanzas each, in exact imitation of the Pindaric model. The groups are all made up of a strophe of twelve lines, an antistrophe of twelve lines, and an epode of seventeen lines. The strophes and antistrophes are all identical in structure, and the three epodes are also precisely alike; that is, the position of the rhymes and the length of corresponding lines are the same in all of the three. Both these structures are very complicated, the general law being that the stanzas, especially the epodes, begin with short lines of three or four feet, and that the lines increase in length towards the close, which is marked by a line of six feet. The rhymes are sometimes in couplets and sometimes alternate.

It is evident that very great labor must have been expended to produce a poem in so rigid and elaborate a form, and it is safe to say that it was labor thrown away as far as the naturalization of a new verse form was the object. Of course painstaking work even on some literary trifle is never entirely thrown away, but Gray's labor on this ode and on *The Bard*, two years later, and still more elaborate in structure, did not result in the production of a poem especially delightful to the artistic sense. The correspondencies are too far apart to

be felt as symmetries. The original Grecian ode was chanted with the accompaniment of a graceful and symmetrical dance. Thus the ear aided by the eye could take cognizance of and the hearer and onlooker receive pleasure from the finely graded recurrences of meter, some of which marked intervals of thirty lines of the song. But the ear alone cannot remember coördination separated by so long an interval. It gives no pleasure to know that the line "Lance to lance and horse to horse" echoes the line "Smeared with gore and ghastly pale" forty-eight lines before, and is again echoed by the line "Gales from blooming Eden bear," forty-eight lines after. We cannot perceive the symmetry by reading. But if these lines corresponded to the recurrence of a striking movement in a dignified, stately minuet which accompanied their delivery, doubtless their recurrence would arouse an emotion of the keenest artistic delight. Deprived of their handmaids, the choral dance and the music, they are poetically valueless as correspondencies.

Both of these admirable poems are, however, odes in the fullest sense. The determinate progress of the thought from beginning to end is especially noticeable. It is true that the complicated stanzaic structure is not easily perceived, and that the poet labored too hard to attain it, but they are sustained and impersonal lyrics on a dignified subject, at once vigorous and finished. It is said that Byron was much influenced by them.

The first strophe of *The Bard* is enough to exemplify the energy which should characterize an ode : —

“Ruin seize thee, ruthless King !  
Confusion on thy banners wait ;  
Though fanned by Conquest’s crimson wing,  
They mock the air with idle state.  
Helm nor hauberk’s twisted mail,  
Nor even thy virtues, tyrant, shall avail  
To save thy secret soul from nightly fears,  
From Cambria’s curse, from Cambria’s tears ! ”  
Such were the sounds that o’er the crested pride  
Of the first Edward scattered wild dismay,  
As down the steep of Snowdon’s shaggy side  
He wound with toilsome march his long array.  
Stout Gloster stood aghast in speechless trance ;  
“To arms ! ” cried Mortimer, and couched his quivering lance.

In the first quarter of the nineteenth century the religious, philosophical, and literary ideas of the English, which for a century had been formed on traditionary models, were quickened by many new influences, among which the exciting and changing aspects of the French Revolution were the most direct. Social questions long regarded as settled were debated with feverish enthusiasm by the younger men. Literary expression became with Wordsworth and Coleridge more untrammelled and more varied. Many of the conceptions which were slowly gathering in the general

mind were well fitted for emotional expression in the ode form, for they were based on generous sympathy for humanity, and a much more profound feeling for the beauty of nature and art than had marked the age of Dr. Johnson and Sir Joshua Reynolds. Coleridge and Wordsworth embodied this feeling in odes to *Freedom*, to *Duty*, to *France*, and to *Mont Blanc*. Later, Shelley did much the same in his odes to *Naples*, to *Liberty*, and to the *West Wind*. Many lines of Byron's *Childe Harold* are odelike in structure, as are the addresses to the Ocean, to Venice, and on the Colosseum. Keats, too, expressed passionate love for the beautiful in two well-known odes which are the best muniments to his title as poet.

Ten of Wordsworth's compositions are entitled odes by their author, but several others, even some of his sonnets, have the ode character. The great ode on the *Intimations of Immortality* has been referred to before as justifying irregular versification. It embodies thought, which every one who has reached maturity recognizes more or less distinctly as having come to himself at times. Its popularity depends on its admirable phrasing from both the intellectual and the musical standpoint. The fifth stanza exemplifies these qualities, but no better than do the first, second, and eleventh.

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting :

The soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,

And cometh from afar ;  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God who is our home ;  
Heaven lies about us in our infancy ;  
Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
Upon the growing Boy,  
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,  
He sees it in his joy ;  
The youth, who daily further from the east  
Must travel, still is nature's priest,  
And by the vision splendid  
Is on his way attended ;  
At length the man perceives it die away,  
And fade into the light of common day.

The *Ode to Duty* is a succinct embodiment of manly Puritanism. These were written in 1806 and 1804 respectively, in the poet's early manhood. The choral ode written in 1847 as part of his duty as poet laureate, in his seventy-seventh year, is naturally perfunctory. It may be doubted whether Wordsworth felt enough sympathy with music to enable him to compose an ode for singing voices. The occasion was the installation of Prince Albert as Chancellor of the University of Cambridge. The ode is divided into parts for the chorus, the tenor, the bass, the alto, and the soprano, and all are equally frigid, though less pompous and empty than some seventeenth-century laureate odes.

*Introduction and Chorus*

For thirst of power that heaven disowns,  
For temples, towers, and thrones  
Too long insulted by the spoiler's shock,  
Indignant Europe cast  
Her stormy foe at last  
To reap the whirlwind on a Libyan rock.

*Solo (Tenor)*

War is passion's basest game  
Madly played to win a name ;  
Up starts some tyrant, Earth and Heaven to dare,  
The servile million bow ;  
But will the lightning glance aside to spare  
The Despot's laureled brow ?

*Chorus*

War is mercy, glory, fame,  
Waged in Freedom's holy cause ;  
Freedom such as man may claim  
Under God's restraining laws.  
Such is Albion's fame and glory ;  
Let rescued Europe tell the story.

The other stanzas rise to no higher level of thought or diction. Of the odes of Coleridge the first, *The Departing Year*, written in 1796, in his twenty-fourth year, follows pretty closely the Pindaric divisions of strophe, antistrophe, and epode. It is characteristic of the author that after the sec-

ond strophe he departs from the regular scheme and changes the length and form of the stanzas. His genius was impatient of a regular structural formula. So also in his fine ode to France written in the next year, the five stanzas are all of twenty-one lines and the rhyme scheme is the same in all, but the long and short lines do not follow each other in the same order; that is, he follows the pattern of Spenser's *Epithalamion* in part and disregards it in part. It is none the less a spirited, elevated, and musical poem, and there is no reason to suppose that it would have been improved had the author laboriously sought technical exactness.

His *Hymn before Sunrise* in blank verse might well be entitled an Ode to Mont Blanc. It merits the vague term "sublime," as well as any passage from *Paradise Lost*. The subject of the ode to *Dejection* is too personal for the true ode form. It consists of eight irregular stanzas and is a poignant expression of helplessness and weakness, in which the author in lamenting the gradual decay of his poetic power gives the best proof of its existence. In this, as in *Kubla Khan* and *Christabel*, Coleridge exemplifies the proposition that metrical irregularity in itself may be in the hands of a poet a means of emotional expression quite as forcibly as Wordsworth does in the ode on the *Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*.

The elation aroused in thoughtful young men by the French Revolution in the last decade of the



eighteenth century was chilled by the lawless outrages of the "Reign of Terror," and the subsequent military dictatorship of Napoleon. Enthusiasm for freedom and liberty — vague but inspiring words — finds its proper embodiment in dithyrambic song. Coleridge and Wordsworth were at first thrilled with the idea that mankind was making an abrupt advance toward social emancipation from injustice, and then they were disappointed to find that centuries of oppression unfit both the oppressors and the oppressed for freedom. But after the battle of Waterloo and the restoration of the Bourbons it soon became evident that the Revolution was justified by precedent conditions and that "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" were not altogether unmeaning words. The career of Napoleon appealed powerfully to the imagination, and Shelley, profoundly impressed with the idea that "political freedom was the direct agent to effect the happiness of mankind," and hating injustice with a fierce personal feeling, made the ode as well as the semi-allegorical poem a vehicle for his passionate belief in progress and perfectibility. Byron, whose energetic power of expression makes many passages in his longer works detachable and ode-like, designates but two of his poems "odes." Keats loved concrete beauty more than moral beauty or abstract principle, but his odes are among the most precious possessions of the English-speaking race.

The lyric impulse combined with enthusiasm for hopeless causes makes Shelley's poetry and even his life an ode to humanity. *The Revolt of Islam*, though an allegory, idealizes the struggle of a people against selfish power acknowledging no responsibility except its own vicious nature. Passionate scorn for injustice and passionate love for the beautiful and the righteous filled his heart and overflowed in his verse. He says, "I have written fearlessly." He entitles but few of his poems "odes," among them the *Ode to the West Wind*, *Ode to Heaven*, and *Ode to Liberty*, but the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* and the verses to *Mont Blanc* are as truly odes as any in English literature. *Adonais* is designated an "elegy" and has more the nature of a lament than of a funeral ode or encomium. The *Ode to Liberty* has the rapidity and the sustained vigor which we associate with the word "Pindaric."

A glorious people vibrated again

The lightning of the Nations : Liberty

From heart to heart, from tower to tower, o'er Spain,

Scattering contagious fire into the sky

Gleamed. My soul spurned the chains of its dismay,

And in the rapid plumes of song,

Clothed itself sublime and strong ;

As a young eagle soars the morning clouds among,

Hovering in verse o'er its accustomed prey,

Till from its station in the heaven of fame

The Spirit's whirlwind rapt it, and the ray

Of the remotest sphere of living flame  
Which paves the void was from behind it flung  
As foam from a ship's swiftness, when there came  
A voice from out the deep: "I will record the same."

The rise and fall of liberty in Greece, Rome, Italy,  
and Germany is detailed and the fate of Saxon Eng-  
land and of the Commonwealth sketched when —

England's prophets hailed thee [Liberty] as their  
queen

In songs, whose music cannot pass away  
Though it must flow forever: not unseen  
Before the spirit-sighted countenance  
Of Milton didst thou pass from the sad scene  
Beyond whose night he saw with a dejected mien.

The fifteenth stanza expresses vigorously the  
hatred Shelley felt for the word "king" and all  
that it represented to him:—

Oh, that the free would stamp the impious name

Of King into the dust! or write it there  
So that this blot upon the page of fame

Were as a serpent's path which the light air  
Erases and the flat sands close behind!

Ye the oracle have heard;

Lift the victory-flashing sword,  
And cut the snaky knots of this foul Gordian word,  
Which, weak itself as stubble, yet can bind

Into a mass irrefragably firm  
The axes and the rods which awe mankind;

The sound has poison in it, 'tis the sperm  
Of what makes life foul, cankerous, and abhorred.  
Disdain not thou, at thine appointed term,  
To set thine armed heel on this reluctant worm.

The poem *To a Skylark* may also be regarded as an ode in the Horatian manner. It and the *Ode to the West Wind* are among the best loved of Shelley's poems. The *Ode to Naples* is as full of electric energy as the *Ode to Liberty*.

Byron, though less under conviction than Shelley, commanded the rhetorical vigor of style and the constructive power necessary to the composition of the ode. He wrote but one or two odes, though, as said before, passages of lyrical description, which are odes in spirit and structure, might be detached from his longer poems. In his *Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte* his cynical temper leads him into satirical taunts foreign to the ode spirit. With Shelley, indignation is rarely directed against an individual. Byron writes : —

But thou forsooth, must be a king,  
And don the purple vest ;  
As if that foolish robe could wring  
Remembrance from thy breast.  
Where is that faded garment ? where  
The gewgaws thou wert fond to wear, —  
The star — the string — the crest ?  
Vain, froward child of empire ! say,  
Are all thy playthings snatched away ?

His closing stanza, however, is more generous in tone, possibly no less just: —

Where may the wearied eye repose  
When gazing on the great,  
Where neither guilty glory glows  
Nor despicable state?  
Yes — one — the first — the last — the best —  
The Cincinnatus of the West,  
Whom envy dared not hate,  
Bequeathed the name of Washington  
To make man blush there was but one!

The stanzaic form of the above is altogether too tripping and songlike for an ode, even for a Horatian ode, and the satire is throughout too direct and personal. Indignation like Shelley's may find its proper expression in an ode, but Byron's *Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte* is hardly better entitled to the name than is his brilliant and witty satire *The Vision of Judgment*. Nevertheless, Byron might have written some great odes if he had believed in humanity.

Keats entitled six of his poems odes. Two of them, the *Ode on a Grecian Urn* and the *Ode to a Nightingale*, are supremely beautiful in expression. The sentiment in each is far more subtle and delicate than that which ordinarily finds expression in the ode form, but the phrase gives the sentiment reality with beauty and precision. We feel with the poet that material things are unreal and tran-

sient compared with the thrilling song of the bird heard in darkness, which links itself with the everlasting in nature, and is, indeed, eternal since its essence is the beautiful which exists unchanged from the beginning. We have a perception that ultimate truth is expressed in the seventh stanza :—

Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird ;  
No hungry generations tread thee down ;  
The voice I hear this passing night was heard  
In ancient days by emperor and clown :  
Perhaps the selfsame song that found a path  
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,  
She stood in tears amid the alien corn ;  
The same that oft-times hath  
Charmed magic casements opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas, in fairy lands forlorn.

The word “forlorn” brings him back from a perception of the eternal and spiritual in nature, which the beautiful dimly evokes, to his “sole self,” no longer a part of the universal, but an individual, pathetically transient, the heir to suffering and death, “clothed in the muddy vesture of decay” ; and the song of the bird passes away leaving him uncertain whether it or the world of reality is a dream. The thought is so different from the vigorous everyday ideas, “understood of the people,” which we associate with the word “ode” as to tempt us to call the title in this case a misnomer.

In the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, the sentiment is no

less poetic. The urn itself is a "sylvan historian, who canst thus express a flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme." The figures on it are fixed in an everlasting attitude of beauty and expectation. It is the pursuit, not the fruition, that makes happiness. This "cold pastoral," with its moveless and silent figures of youths and maidens and singers, is an arrested bit of life, and —

When old age shall this generation waste,  
 Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe  
 Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou sayest  
 "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" — that is all  
 Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

These two odes contain a happy combination of end-stopt and overflow lines. Both are written in ten-line stanzas with five beats to the line, and the rhyme scheme in both is a quatrain with alternate rhymes and then a sextette in which the terminals of the first three lines are echoed by the last three. There is, however, a slight difference in the versification. In the five stanzas of the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, the ten lines are all of equal length and the sextette rhymes run *abc-abc* in two cases only, the others being *abc-bac* or *abc-acb*. In the *Ode to a Nightingale* the eighth line is short — three accents only: "In some melodious plot," or "But here there is no light." In this the sextette rhymes are invariably *abc-abc*. Possibly Keats's poetic ear perceived

instinctively that, the short line being more emphatic, the rhymes after it should fall in an invariable order. Our attention is arrested by the short line, and we naturally expect it to rhyme to the same line in each stanza. When the lines are all of the same length, the slight change in rhyme sequence gives no shock. Whether or not this adherence to sequence in one case and slight departure from it in the other is premeditated or instinctive is of little consequence and can never be determined. Both of the poems are entirely satisfying in form.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century (1877) Coventry Patmore published a number of odes, the work of a man of letters rather than an inspired singer. The *Ode to the Unknown Eros* is a very good argument from example to prove the proposition that "when verse does not gain by being written without reference to strict stanzaic law, it loses." In the following extract it will be noticed that the length of the lines is determined by the chance occurrence of the rhymes and not by any inner correspondence between emotion and expression : —

What rumored heavens are these  
Which not a poet sings,  
O unknown Eros? What this breeze  
Of sudden wings,  
Speeding at far returns of time from interstellar space  
To fan my very face,  
And gone as fleet,

FORMS OF ENG. POETRY — 12



Through delicatest ether<sup>1</sup> feathering soft their solitary  
beat,  
With ne'er a light plume dropped nor any trace  
To speak of whence they came, or whither they de-  
part?

This is work of the fancy, not of the imagination, and the lawlessness of the meter has no justification in any higher law of harmony. The metrical construction may profitably be compared with that of Wordsworth's ode.

Mr. Swinburne possesses some of the powers necessary to a writer of odes. His music is striking and insistent though lacking in all the profounder qualities. He is, however, always in earnest or forces himself to think that he is. His verses to Landor are every way beautiful, and the stanza —

I came as one whose thoughts half linger,  
Half run before,  
The youngest to the oldest singer  
That England bore

is of absolute perfection. *A Watch in the Night* which was referred to in the first chapter might have been entitled "An Ode to the Nations." It is marred, as is much of Swinburne's work, by lack of constructive power. Stanza is added to stanza, all of monotonous melody, but not definite steps in the unfolding and concluding of the central

<sup>1</sup> "Delicatest ether" is probably the most cacophonous combination to be found in all poetry.

theme. The poem might have been closed at any point after the eighth stanza. Much the same stricture applies to the stanzas of the fine *Ode to Victor Hugo in Exile*, an evenly sustained dithyrambic of unqualified praise. A brief excerpt will exemplify the energetic style of the encomium:—

Thou art chief of us and lord;  
Thy song is as a sword  
Keen-edged and scented in the blade from flowers;  
Thou art lord and king; but we  
Lift younger eyes and see  
Less of high hope, less light on wandering hours;  
Hours that have borne men down so long,  
Seen the right fail, and watched uplift the wrong.

But thine imperial soul,  
As years and ruins roll  
To the same end, and all things and all dreams  
With the same wreck and roar  
Drift on the dim same shore,  
Still in the bitter foam and brackish streams  
Tracks the fresh water-spring to be  
And sudden sweeter fountains in the sea.

Tennyson's *Ode to Memory* was written before he had reached his twenty-first year. It is a reflective poem, but in form and structure a true ode, nor is its beauty altogether that of promise. His *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*, twenty-two years later, is all that the occasion demanded,

a musical, dignified, and patriotic encomium. It is irregular in stanzaic construction ; the movement changes from the opening :—

Bury the Great Duke  
With an Empire's lamentation,

through the solemn funeral march :—

Lead out the pageant sad and slow,  
and the sober, exultant mention of his victories,  
the confident prophecy of his future fame :—

Peace, his triumph will be sung  
By some yet unmolded tongue,

to the final requiem and farewell :—

Lay your earthly fancies down,  
And in the vast cathedral leave him :  
God accept him, Christ receive him.

These changes are but slight and consist chiefly in shortening the lines, but they are beautifully accordant with the sentiment embodied in each division of the ode. The rhymes are for the most part in couplets or alternate, and in the fifth stanza, the commitment, the repeated sound "old" has a dirgelike effect :—

All is over and done ;  
Render thanks to the Giver,  
England, for thy son.

Let the bell be tolled.  
Render thanks to the Giver,  
And render him to the mold.  
Under the cross of gold  
That shines over city and river,  
There shall he rest forever  
Among the wise and bold.  
Let the bell be tolled,  
And a reverent people behold  
The towering car, the sable steeds ;  
Bright let it be with its blazoned deeds,  
Dark in its funeral fold.  
Let the bell be tolled ;  
And a deeper knell in the heart be knolled ;  
And the sound of the sorrowing anthem rolled  
Thro' the dome of the golden cross ;  
And the volleying cannon thunder his loss ;  
He knew their voices of old,  
For many a time in many a clime,  
His captain's-ear has heard them boom  
Bellowing victory, bellowing doom.

The dignity of these iambics changes to an exultant, mixed trochaic movement in the invocation to Nelson : —

Who is he that cometh like an honored guest,  
With banner and with music, with soldier and with  
priest,  
With a nation weeping, and breaking on my rest ?  
Mighty seaman this is he  
Was great by land as thou by sea.

The poem is a thoroughly worthy national expression and is artistic in a high sense. Tennyson's choral ode sung at the opening of the International Exhibition in 1863 as well as his "welcomes" to Alexandra and to Alexandrovna are the work of a poet so skillful in his art as to be unable to perform a perfunctory task in a commonplace manner, but they are far from being such great monuments of poetry as the *Ode on the Death of the Duke*.

In our own country Lowell's *Commemoration Ode* stands first among a number of occasional poems, some of which, like Stedman's ode at the Yale Bicentennial, filled all the requirements of dignified occasional verse. Mr. Lowell had the advantage of a very "great occasion." The war was over and time enough had elapsed to dull the poignancy of grief and the keenness of personal resentment. Men could now begin to view the Civil War in its moral aspects as a part of human development, not simply a clash of physical forces where the result might be merely a change in civil geography. A true conception of the character of President Lincoln had grown up in the public mind and his death was as yesterday. The poet himself was among those bereaved by the war. All these things combined to charge the day with emotion, and Mr. Lowell could say with absolute certainty of response, "In my breast, thoughts beat and burn." The death of the Duke of Wellington

called forth national emotion, but in a very different sense. Americans regarded their President with personal affection and felt for him as tribesmen might for a chieftain who had been treacherously done to death when engaged in their service. The Duke of Wellington had been a national figure for a generation, but neither wrath nor grief follow one however distinguished who dies in the fullness of time. Nor was the duke in the least a leader of the people in the sense that Lincoln was. Lowell could appeal to a far deeper and higher range of emotion than could Tennyson, for there is such a thing as national love compared to which national pride is but cheap and thin and commonplace. Tennyson could draw on the full, rich history of England for color; he was, too, a far better melodic word artist than Lowell, but his subject was far inferior in dignity and scope. The odes are as different as possible, as different as are America and England. The most that Tennyson can say for the Duke of Wellington is that he was a steady, successful soldier that "never lost an English gun," and that he told the truth — qualities not so rare as to deserve enthusiastic celebration. This Lowell might have said of General Grant, but the thought of Lincoln lifts him at once to a higher plane: —

Such was he our martyr chief  
Whom late the Nation he had led,  
With ashes on her head,  
Wept with the passion of an angry grief:

Forgive me if from present things I turn  
 To speak what in my heart will beat and burn,  
 And hang my wreath on his world-honored urn.

Nature they say doth dote,  
 And cannot make a man  
 Save on some worn-out plan,  
 Repeating as by rote.  
 For him her Old World molds aside she threw,  
 And, choosing sweet clay from the breast  
 Of the unexhausted West,  
 With stuff untainted shaped a hero new ;  
 Wise, steadfast in the strength of God, and true.  
 How beautiful to see  
 Once more a shepherd of mankind, indeed,  
 Who loved his charge but never loved to lead ;  
 One whose meek flock the people joyed to be,  
 Not lured by any cheat of birth,  
 But by his clear-grained human worth,  
 And brave old wisdom of sincerity.

\* \* \* \* \*

Nothing of Europe here ;  
 Or then, of Europe fronting mornward still,  
 Ere any, names of Serf and Peer  
 Could Nature's equal scheme deface ;  
 And thwart her genial will ;  
 Here was a type of the true elder race  
 And one of Plutarch's men talked with us face to face.

\* \* \* \* \*

Great captains with their guns and drums  
 Disturb our judgment for the hour,

But at last silence comes :  
These are all gone, and, standing like a tower,  
Our children shall behold his fame,  
The kindly-earnest, brave, foreseeing man,  
Sagacious, patient, dreading praise, not blame,  
New birth of our new soil, the first American.

In his ode entitled *Under the Old Elm*, commemorating the one hundredth anniversary of Washington's taking command of the American army, July 3, 1775, Mr. Lowell pays as noble a tribute to Washington as he had to Lincoln in 1865. He is said to have preferred this to any of his memorial odes, — but the remembrance of the recent dead seems to communicate to the *Commemoration Ode* a more personal note than can be infused into verse celebrating our Revolutionary heroes. The invocation to Virginia, however, connects the recent and the remote past : —

Virginia gave us this imperial man,  
Cast in the massive mold  
Of those high-statured ages old  
Which into grander forms our mortal metal ran ;  
She gave us this unblemished gentleman ;  
What shall we give her back but love and praise  
As in the dear old unestranged days  
Before the inevitable wrong began ?  
Mother of States and undiminished men,  
Thou gavest us a country, giving him,  
And we owe alway what we owed thee then ;



The boon thou wouldst have snatched from us again,  
Shines as before with no abatement dim.

\* \* \* \* \*

We from this consecrated plain stretch out  
Our hands as free from afterthought or doubt,  
As here the united North  
Poured her embrowned manhood forth  
In welcome of our savior and thy son.  
Through battle we have better learned thy worth,  
The long-breathed valor and undaunted will,  
Which, like his own, the day's disaster done,  
Could, safe in manhood, suffer and be still.  
Both thine and ours the victory hardly won :  
If ever with distempered voice or pen  
We have misdeemed thee, here we take it back,  
And for the dead of both don common black.  
Be to us evermore as thou wast then.

The gentle verse of Longfellow accorded better with the flute than with the trumpet or the bugle. The ode form did not attract him, apparently, though the *Building of the Ship* has more vigor and rapidity of movement than some so-called odes. It is, however, narrative and descriptive and is more of a ballad than an ode. Whittier adhered pretty closely to simple stanzaic models and to short compositions. In consequence his "national lyrics" with the possible exception of *Laus Deo* are not strictly odes. When he wrote verses for a public occasion or for singing, they naturally took the form of hymns. The poetic addresses on public

occasions delivered by Dr. Holmes were written in the heroic couplet and were at once witty and academic. Sidney Lanier's choral ode, the *Centennial Cantata*, for the opening of the Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876, for which Dudley Buck wrote the music, though written entirely with a view to musical rendition, treats the topics naturally suggested with breadth and vigor. Mrs. Harriet Monroe's ode for the World's Fair at Chicago, 1893, is a dignified composition worthy of the occasion. Sidney Lanier's choral ode, the opening stanza of which follows, produced a great effect when given by the trained chorus of two hundred voices : —

## CENTENNIAL CANTATA

From this hundred-terraced height,  
Sight more large with nobler light  
Ranges down yon towering years.  
Humbler smiles and lordlier tears  
Shine and fall, shine and fall,  
While old voices rise and call  
Yonder where the to-and-fro  
Weltering of my Long-Ago  
Moves about the moveless base  
Far below my resting place.

Mayflower, Mayflower, slowly hither flying,  
Trembling westward o'er yon balking sea,  
Hearts within, "Farewell, dear England," sighing,  
Winds without, "But dear in vain," replying,

Gray-lipped waves about thee shouted, crying,  
"No, it shall not be!"

Lanier's *Psalm of the West*, written in the same year as the *Centennial Cantata*, is a poetical review of our history in ode form and movement, but long enough to be divided into three odes on different historical epochs. His *Ode to Johns Hopkins University* is one of the many excellent "poems for occasions" buried here and there in our literature, the interest of which was heightened by the occasion but by no means entirely dependent on it. The odes by William Vaughn Moody and Owen Wister, published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, go to show that vigorous poetic expression is not a lost art in America, and that the ode form is well adapted to the multifarious thought and broad social emotions of our age.

## CHAPTER V

### DIRGES AND MEMORIAL VERSE

THE emotion of grief seeks relief in rhythmical and metrical language as naturally as does the emotion of love or exultation. Dirges, laments, and funeral hymns are connected with the earliest religious observances. The "keen" or wailing cry of Celtic women over the dead is a survival of the tribal lament, and is the only primitive poetical expression that can ever be heard in our country. Feelings of which we are unconscious though we have inherited them from very distant ancestors respond vaguely to this ancient lyrical wail. The funeral hymn, too, meets a very general response from emotions common to all civilized people, but much nearer the surface. It is unnecessary, however, to refer to the universal nature of grief, the "legacy of love," the inevitable consequence of the conditions which make society possible and life endurable. It is sufficient to say that a class of poems in our own, and in every other language, gives expression and relief to sorrow, or commem-

orates eminent character and services. In some of them personal feeling is dominant, in others, when the loss is public or national, the feelings of the community are embodied. If personal feeling is entirely absent and the poet is merely the spokesman of the community, the poem is an ode, like Tennyson's *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*. Personal feeling, however, is rarely entirely absent, for the poet feels the loss of the community as if it were his own, the situation reproduces itself in his mind as vividly as a personal experience could, he sympathizes with the nation or with humanity in an untimely loss as Shelley does in his lament for Keats. Memorial verse is essentially emotional, except in some of the odes of the official poets laureate on the death of the sovereign, in which the diction and the sentiment are alike professional.

The first lament in our language in point of time is Chaucer's *Boke of the Duchesse*. This was written in commemoration of Blanche of Castile, wife of John of Gaunt, first Duke of Lancaster. It is romantic in construction and hints only remotely at actual life. The poet, being unable to sleep, promises Morpheus a feather bed and pillows if he will relieve him, whereupon he not only falls asleep, but is visited by a dream in which a knight celebrates the beauty of his lady and laments her death. The only reference to the Lady Blanche is in the lines: —

And gode faire Whyte she hete,<sup>1</sup>  
That was my lady name right,  
She was bothe fair and bright,  
She hadde not hir name wrong.

The romantic allegory is far removed from our methods of expression, but we can still admire the poet's conception of a fair and gracious lady, of whom the knight says:—

I saw hir daunce so comlily,  
Carole and sing so swetely  
Laugh and pleye so womanly,  
And loke so debonairly,  
So goodly speke and so frendly,  
That certes, I trow, that evermore,<sup>2</sup>  
Nas seyn so blissful a tresor.

The memorial verses so frequently prefixed to the collected works of dead authors are usually not much more than complimentary notices of the book. Ben Jonson's well-known verses to the memory of "My beloved, the Author, Master William Shakespeare and what he has left us," evince generous appreciation of the poet's pre-eminence and enthusiastic friendship as well. He declines to rank him with his contemporaries,— "great, but disproportioned muses,"—and boldly claims for him a place with the greatest of all ages. It is the first recognition of the real character of

<sup>1</sup> *Hete*, was called.

<sup>2</sup> *Evermore nas seen*, never was seen.

Shakespeare's genius. He speaks of his — Shakespeare's — character in the lines : —

Look how the father's face  
Lives in his issue. Even so the race  
Of Shakespeare's mind and manners brightly shines  
In his well-turned and true-filed lines,

as if his friend's nature was as harmonious and well balanced as his verses are. We must regret that the eulogist did not go more into detail and express his feelings for the author as fully as he did his admiration of his book, but we are thankful he said as much as he did. The other verses in the folios are confined to praise of the poetry and the acting qualities of the plays. The finest were prefixed to the second folio (1632) and are signed I. M. S. They recognize the vital quality of Shakespeare's historical characters quite as distinctly as modern critics have done : —

A mind reflecting ages past, whose clear  
And equal surface can make things appear —  
Distant a thousand years, and represent  
Them in their lively colours, just extent :  
To outrun hasty Time, retrieve the Fates,  
Roll back the heavens, blow ope the iron gates  
Of Death and Lethe, where confused lie  
Great heaps of ruinous mortality :  
In that deep dusky dungeon to discern  
A royal ghost from churls ; by art to learn  
The physiognomy of shades, and give

Them sudden birth, wondering how oft they live ;  
 What story coldly tells, what poets feign  
 A second-hand, and picture without brain —  
 Senseless and soulless shows — to give a stage,  
 Ample, and true with life — voice, action, age,  
 As Plato's year and new scene of the world  
 Them unto us, or us to them had hurled :  
 To raise our ancient sovereigns from their hearse,  
 Make kings his subjects ; by exchanging verse,  
 Enliven their pale trunks, that the present age  
 Joys in their joy and trembles at their rage :

\* \* \* \* \*

This, and much more which cannot be expressed  
 But by himself, his tongue, and his own breast,  
 Was Shakespeare's freehold ; which his cunning brain  
 Improved by favor of the ninefold train.

The poem is remarkable for containing the longest known sentence in verse or indeed in prose, — nearly five hundred words, — yet so well constructed as to be readily comprehensible. The two poems prove that Shakespeare was as fully appreciated by thoughtful men in the seventeenth century as he has been by critics in general since the day of Coleridge and Hazlitt.

Memorial verses are so numerous that it is not possible to refer even to the names of those that have appeared since 1623. The three great dirges in our language are : Milton's *Lycidas*, Shelley's *Adonais*, and Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. *Lycidas* appeared in 1637, when the author was twenty-nine



3. { years of age, in a volume of verses commemorative of Edward King, a young man of promise and a fellow collegian with Milton at Cambridge, who had been lost at sea crossing to Ireland the year before. The verses in the volume are partly in the classic languages and partly in English, and Milton's appears last. Its construction is in imitation of the pastoral lament as used by Theocritus, and imitated by Virgil, but the form is used with great freedom and boldness. It was three years since the poet wrote *Comus*, and he preludes the lament with the lines:—

Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more,  
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,  
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,  
And with forced fingers rude  
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.  
Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear  
Compels me to disturb your season due ;  
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,  
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.  
Who would not sing for Lycidas? he knew  
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.  
He must not float upon his watery bier  
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind  
Without the meed of some melodious tear.

It is possible that Milton felt that his education in poetry was not complete, that it was "with forced fingers rude" that he must weave

the wreath of laurel and myrtle. However that may be, he produced a wonderful poem compounded of incongruous elements, using the pastoral fiction, yet rising into lofty denunciation, not unworthy of the Apocalypse. Even the diction is full of incongruous images, like : the " parching wind " in conjunction with the " watery bier," the " melodious tear," " blind mouths," all of them bold wrenchings of language to poetic effect. The sweet pastoral tone of the opening with its classical figures passes into the terrible arraignment of worldly ecclesiastics put into the mouth of St. Peter, a strain entirely foreign to the pensive delicacy of the first sixty lines. The poet himself seems to be conscious of this, for he opens the next paragraph : —

Return, Alpheus ; the dread voice is past  
That shrunk thy streams ; return, Sicilian muse,

and resumes the pastoral strain in the invocation to the flowers to " strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies." In the next paragraph he passes to the Christian standpoint and declares that Lycidas is in heaven : —

In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.  
There entertain him all the saints above  
In solemn troops, and sweet societies,  
That sing, and singing in their glory move,  
And wipe the tears forever from his eyes.

The poem begins in the first person and closes with an ottava rima in the third :—

Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and rills  
While the still morn went out with sandals grey.

The very beautiful lines expressing the true worth of the studious life of the poet scholar seem like personal reflections interjected into the pastoral lament and are apologized for in the lines which follow :—

O fountain Arethuse, and thou honored flood,  
Smooth-sliding Mincius, crowned with vocal reeds,  
That strain I heard was of a higher mood.  
But now my oat proceeds.

The images —

That fatal and perfidious bark  
Built in the eclipse and rigged with curses dark,

That two-handed engine at the door  
Stands ready to smite once and smite no more,

and

Beyond the stormy Hebrides,  
Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide  
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world, -

are of tremendous power, untranslatable and unforgettable. The "bottom of the monstrous world" figures the dark, unsounded depths of the ocean

where the body may be carried, the "two-handed engine" is the inevitable instrument of the force of righteousness, the sword of the wrath of God, but how much more the words mean than any explanation! No one can give a definite meaning to either of these phrases without falling into absurdity. In no other poem where the pastoral fiction is employed can images of such startling significance be found.

But, in spite of the incongruity of the artificial and the imaginative elements, the poem is a unity and proves that a great poet need not observe the ordinary rules of composition. "Nice customs courtesy to great kings." The inner spirit of the Reformation is compounded with the spirit of the Renaissance into a harmony which embraces both. Luxuriant classical ornamentation only sets off lofty moral earnestness. The sound of the flute rises naturally into the call of the trumpet. Milton's *Lycidas* is of organic, not of formal construction, and, though it is the shortest of the three dirges and seems to have been written hastily, is the greatest of the three. It is hardly necessary to add that though the rhymes are irregularly placed and sometimes omitted altogether, the verbal melody is of the highest order and the poem as a whole has much the quality of a musical composition by a master. The invocation to the flowers is very beautiful though less exquisite than that which Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Perdita:—

O Proserpina ;  
For the flowers now, that, frighted thou let'st fall  
From Dis's wagon ! Daffodils,  
That come before the swallow dares, and take  
The winds of March with beauty. Violets dim,  
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes  
Or Cytherea's breath ; pale primroses  
That die unmarried, ere they can behold  
Bright Phœbus in his strength, a malady  
Most incident to maids.

— *Winter's Tale.*

Milton, on the other hand, thinks of flowers, not as beautiful in themselves, but as emblems of nature's mourning.

Return, Sicilian muse,  
And call the vales and bid them hither cast  
Their bells and flow'rets of a thousand hues.  
Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use  
Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,  
On whose fresh lap the swart star sparely looks,  
Throw hither all your quaint enamelled eyes,  
That on the green turf suck the honied showers,  
And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.  
Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,  
The tufted crow-toe and pale jessamine,  
The white pink and the pansy freaked with jet,  
The glowing violet,  
The musk rose and the well-attired woodbine,  
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,  
And every flower that sad embroidery wears ;  
Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,

And daffodillies fill their cups with tears,  
To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.  
For, so to interpose a little ease,  
Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise.  
Ay me, whilst thee the shores and sounding seas  
Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurled;  
Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,  
Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide  
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world.

It would seem at first glance that to bring in successively, nymphs, the god Apollo, the Herald of the Sea, the god Eolus, the river god of an English stream, and the Christian St. Peter, and to close the scene in the Christian heaven must result in a strange phantasmagoria, but in Milton's poem all contribute to the appeal to the imagination like the figures on a Grecian frieze. The transitions are so happily managed that one topic suggests another, and all is movement from beginning to end. The poet "touches the tender stops of various quills, with eager thought warbling his Doric lay." Though the form is artificial, the "eager thought" is earnest and sincere. This poem alone is enough to prove the fallacy of the assertion that the English Reformation was little but a change in the personnel of ecclesiastical authority, for a poet scholar of the rank of Milton integrates the deepest feeling and thought of the age in which he lives. The very fact that he puts the denunciation of the English church into the

mouth of St. Peter, the founder of the Roman church, shows how firm a stand for radical righteousness Milton and men of his party took in the seventeenth century.

For the next two centuries there is no lack of funeral odes, eulogies of the dead, poetic epitaphs, and the like. Most of them are professional and perfunctory. Dryden's ode *To the Pious Memory of Mrs. Anne Killigrew*, 1686, is one of the heartiest and honestest of these poetical tributes, and contains in the fourth stanza an expression of the shame which must come over a writer of plays, if he has any elevation of soul, when he reflects in middle age how he "profaned the heavenly gift of Poesy," and added "fat pollutions" of his own, "to increase the steaming ordures of the stage." This stanza goes far to redeem the memory of Dryden. Insincere adulation reaches its absurdest height and artificial poetic construction its lowest depth in Southey's ode on the death of George III. A reading of poetry of this class throws some light on social conventionalities, but none on poetic exposition of a serious theme. It is interesting to see how far the expression of one of the profoundest emotions can be warped by keeping within the limits of an unreal treatment, but the examination is depressing in the extreme. It is not till 1851 that we find in Shelley's *Adonais* a poet meditating on the awful but ever-present solemnity of death in a manner worthy of his

theme. John Keats died at Rome, and Shelley, though not bound to him by the ties of personal friendship, knew him and was entirely conscious of his genius. He believed, probably erroneously, that the life of the younger poet had been embittered by malicious and stupid criticism in the reviews. He had suffered from the same treatment himself. His grief for the loss of a precious and divine talent, and his indignation at the thick-witted and unthinking cruelty with which the world had rejected it, are as efficient in giving his verse vitality as is Milton's hatred of a base and conventional ecclesiasticism. Less self-contained than Milton, his personal emotion finds a less dignified expression, but his sense of the significance of death is, to say the least, no less profound. His poem is more than twice as long as that of Milton, and in musical quality there is not much to choose between them; for both are beautiful, though the irregular canzone gives opportunity for greater melodic variety in the hands of a master than does the Spenserian stanza used by Shelley.

The machinery of Shelley's poem is classic, though only in a very remote degree suggested by classic elegiac poetry. He uses the name Adonais as Milton used the name Lycidas, but at once makes it a synonym for poetry. His verse is, indeed, a monument erected by a poet to poetry rather than by one poet to another. As



“Adonis” was the representative of fleeting youth and of spring, so “Adonais” is the emblematic name of the eternal lover of spiritual beauty. The opening stanza recalls distantly the hymn of Bion to Adonis, the name “Adonais” being chosen because it fits well into the iambic line. The Greek poet begins: “Weep for Adonis he hath perished, the beauteous Adonis, dead is the beauteous Adonis, the Loves join in the lament. No more in thy purple raiment, Cypris, do thou sleep. Arise, thou wretched one, and beat thy breast and say, ‘Adonis is dead.’”

Shelley's lament begins: —

I weep for Adonais — he is dead: —

O weep for Adonais, though our tears

Thaw not the frost that binds so dear a head!

And thou, sad hour, selected from all years

To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers

And teach them thine own sorrow! Say: “With me

Died Adonais; till the Future dares

Forget the past, his fate and fame shall be

An echo and a light unto Eternity.”

The scene is then removed into the vague, infinite, shadowy realm of the spiritual imagination, where Urania, the nurse of divine wisdom, the “mighty mother” of the mystic world, presides. Shelley invented this figurative being, a mediator between mortals and the underlying principles of love and beauty, from the merest hint in Greek mythology.

The invocation to her to grieve for her son, "her youngest, dearest one," occupies twenty-one stanzas. It begins : —

Where wert thou, mighty mother, when he lay,  
When thy son lay, pierced by the shaft which flies  
In darkness? Where was lorn Urania  
When Adonais died? With veiled eyes,  
'Mid listening echoes in her Paradise  
She sate, while one, with soft enamored breath,  
Rekindled all the fading melodies  
With which like flowers that mock the corse beneath  
He had adorned and hid the coming bulk of death.

The poet refers to Milton as sacrificed to the powers of evil dominant among men : —

Most musical of mourners, weep again !  
Lament anew, Urania : — He died,  
Who was the Sire of an immortal strain,  
Blind, old, and lonely, when his country's pride,  
The priest, the slave, and the liberticide,  
Trampled and mocked with many a loathed rite  
Of lust and blood ; he went unterrified  
Into the gulf of death ; but his clear sprite  
Yet reigns on earth, the third among the sons of light.

The announcement of the death of Keats follows, and the reference to "Invisible corruption at the door," waiting for the darkness, is one of the strongest imaginative expressions in poetry : —

To that high capital where kingly Death  
Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay  
He came ; and bought with price of purest breath  
A grave among the eternal. Come away ;  
Haste while the vault of blue Italian day  
Is yet his fitting charnel roof ; while still  
He lies as if in dewy sleep he lay ;  
Awake him not ! surely he takes his fill  
Of deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill.

He will awake no more, oh, never more !  
Within the twilight chamber spreads apace  
The shadow of white Death, and at the door  
Invisible Corruption waits to trace  
His extreme way to her dim dwelling place ;  
The eternal Hunger sits, but pity and awe  
Soothe her pale rage nor dares she to deface  
So fair a prey till darkness and the law  
Of change shall o'er his sleep the mortal curtain draw.

The passage which follows, where the "Quick Dreams," the thoughts that had sprung from the living soul: "Desires and Adorations, winged Persuasions and veiled Destinies, Splendors and Glooms and glimmering Incarnations of hopes and fears and twilight Fantasies," are represented as coming to lament their "father and creator," is conceived and wrought with the poetic power of the seer of visions. The lament of the goddess Urania fills four stanzas, and in it Shelley castigates the reviewers as :—

The herded wolves, bold only to pursue,  
The obscene ravens clamorous o'er the dead,  
The vultures, to the conqueror's banner true,  
Who feed where Desolation first has fed."

After Urania ceases the poets come : —

Thus ceased she ; and the mountain shepherds came,  
Their garlands sere, their magic mantles rent ;  
The Pilgrim of Eternity, whose fame  
Over his living head like heaven is bent  
An early but enduring monument,  
Came, veiling all the lightnings of his song  
In sorrow ; from her wilds Ierne sent  
The sweetest lyrist of her saddest wrong.  
And love taught grief to fall like music from his tongue.

These of course are Byron and Moore. Shelley gives three beautiful stanzas to the description of himself : —

'Midst others of less note, came one frail form,  
A phantom among men ; companionless  
As the last cloud of an expiring storm  
Whose thunder is its knell ; he, as I guess,  
Had gazed on nature's naked loveliness,  
Actæon-like ; and now he fled astray  
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,  
And his own thoughts along that rugged way  
Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their  
prey.

A pard-like spirit beautiful and swift,  
A Love in desolation masked ; — a Power

Girt round with weakness ; — it can scarce uplift  
 The weight of the superincumbent hour ;  
 It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,  
 A breaking billow, — even whilst we speak  
 Is it not broken ? On the withering flower  
 The killing sun smiles brightly ; on a cheek  
 The life can burn in blood even while the heart may  
 break.

The twenty stanzas from the thirty-sixth to the close may be regarded as uttered by Shelley for the lament of the poets. The thirty-seventh stanza is an arraignment of the reviewer, probably Gifford of the *Quarterly* : —

Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame !  
 Live : fear no heavier chastisement from me,  
 Thou noteless blot on a remembered name !

The concluding lament contains the following beautiful stanza now inscribed on the monument to Shelley in Surrey : —

He has outsoared the shadow of our night ;  
 Envy and calumny and hate and pain,  
 And that unrest which men miscall delight,  
 Can touch him not and torture not again ;  
 From the contagion of the world's slow stain  
 He is secure, and now can never mourn  
 A heart grown cold, a head grown gray in vain ;  
 Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn  
 With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

The pantheistic theory that all nature is a manifestation of a pervasive (impersonal ?) divine spirit from which the personal soul is derived and into which it sinks at death, as a drop of water loses its identity in the ocean, is put into brilliant and forcible words :—

He is a portion of the loveliness

Which once he made more lovely. He doth bear  
His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress

Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling  
there

All new successions to the forms they wear ;

Torturing th' unwilling dross, that checks its flight,

To its own likeness, as each mass may bear,  
And bursting in its beauty and its might  
From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light.

He is made one with Nature, there is heard

His voice in all her music, from the moan  
Of thunder to the song of Night's sweet bird,

He is a presence to be felt and known

In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,  
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move

Which has withdrawn his being to its own —  
Which wields the world with never-wearied love  
Sustains it from beneath and kindles it above.

The splendors of the firmament of time

May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not,  
Like stars to their appointed height they climb

And death is a low mist which cannot blot  
The brightness it may veil.

The "inheritors of unfulfilled renown," the poets who died in youth, welcome their brother to the abode of the immortals. Apparently Shelley did not perceive the contradiction between the survival of personality which this implies and the pantheistic idea of the mingling of the soul in the universal reservoir of spirit embodied in the preceding stanzas. The concluding stanzas are an almost hysterical lyrical outburst of personal emotion called up by the thought of death. Shelley's poem is anchored in no such reasoned certainty of the future life as Milton's is, and death is for him a mystery which he passionately longs to solve. He says:—

Go thou to Rome—at once the Paradise,  
The grave, the city, and the wilderness.

Find the grave marked by the Pyramid of  
Cestus:—

Where like an infant's smile over the dead  
A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread.

Die,  
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek:  
Follow where all is fled!

He imagines his spirit disembodied:—

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,  
That Beauty in which all things work and move,  
That Benediction which the eclipsing curse  
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love

Which through the web of being blindly wove  
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,  
Burns bright or dim as each are mirrors of  
The fire for which all thirst ; now beams on me,  
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

The breath whose might I have invoked in song  
Descends on me ; my spirit's bark is driven  
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng  
Whose sails were never to the tempest given,  
The massy earth and sphered skies are riven ;  
I am borne darkly, fearfully afar ;  
Whilst burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,  
The soul of Adonais, like a star,  
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

The incongruities in Milton's poem are superficial and formal, such as must result from the use of classical imagery in a Christian lament. The sincere faith and resolute will of the writer make the Renaissance luxuriance glow with the severe ardor of righteousness. Neither Shelley nor Milton is under the influence of personal sorrow. Both express indignation, but Milton is the advocate of a cause which was to play a great part in national affairs ; he speaks for a great body of earnest, patriotic Englishmen, Shelley for an abstraction, for the unorganized conflict which is always going on between eager, irrational radicalism and stupid, unenlightened conservatism. This gives to Milton's poem much the closer relation to life, and to



Shelley's an air of unreality. The emotion is tenser, but the cause is not one which we can so readily understand. It is less concrete, less part of our everyday experience. The only advantage which Shelley had over Milton lay in his subject, for Keats was a poet and Edward King only a young man of promise, and of this advantage he avails himself fully. Which of these great poems is preferred will depend on the mental constitution of the reader.

7. } Twenty-seven years later appeared Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, inspired by sorrow for the loss of his friend Arthur Henry Hallam. The construction and the thought are much more modern. The form is very simple, octosyllabic quatrains in groups of four or more stanzas constituting poetic paragraphs, or, if we may use the term, strophes. The classical imagery is entirely discarded, and the poet calls his friend simply Arthur. Even the word "Muse" is used but three times. The thought is that of the man of to-day, profoundly moved by personal grief and reflecting on the mystery of death, the question of personal immortality, and the problems of the future life, content with no belief that is not reasonable and more willing to remain in uncertainty than to cheat himself by assuming that he is certain without evidence. The poem contains about three thousand lines and is divided into one hundred and thirty-one strophes, being thus more than twelve times as

long as *Lycidas* and five times as long as *Adonais*. It is the only long poem in our language that does not contain some level stretches of commonplace, and were it not divided into shorter poems, its uniform excellence would be tiresome. It differs from the poems of Milton and Shelley in that it is inspired, not by indignation, but by personal affection.

*In Memoriam* is the journal of a bereaved man extending over three years. In it he records his moods, his reflections, his questionings of life, as he passed from blank despair to serious and hopeful life. It is divided by the recurrence of the festival of Christmas into four parts. The inner unity of the whole is attained because the evolution of the mind of the writer under one dominant emotion, grief, modified by the passage of time, is portrayed with truth and sincerity. The development and progression of the thought can be presented by paraphrasing better than by citation because the beauty of the expression takes attention away from the ideas. The full force of the ideas can, however, not be perceived apart from the original form. The introductory invocation, beginning, "Strong Son of God, immortal Love," is in the form of a prayer. It was evidently written after the poem was finished. It dedicates the entire work, as a worshiper might consecrate the offering he laid on the altar, by an appeal to the Deity. Strictly speaking, it is not a component

part of the poem, although it strikes the keynote by being addressed to the divine Love which rules the universe, and is the creative power which gave men the capacity for the fair earthly fellowship the poem is to embody and immortalize.

In the first strophe of four stanzas the poet says: "I used to think that grief might in time grow incorporate and strengthen character, but now it seems impossible to look forward far enough to see that such an effect can be realized. It is better to cherish a grief, to be helpless and broken rather than to feel that time should have a right to say, 'This man's acute feeling was but temporary.'"

The second strophe is addressed to the yew tree that shadows a grave: "It seems to draw its nourishment from the dead. It is penetrated with a sullen gloom—looking on it, I feel a fellowship with it. I belong to the dead as it does. I am part of the tree."

In the third strophe the poet rebels against the deadening effect of sorrow: "Sorrow, priestess of death, tells me there is no hope nor relief. Fate is too strong. Nature herself is a powerless agency rehearsing the behests of Death. Must I then give myself up to such a creed? Is it not weak and wrong?"

The fourth strophe is also an expression of the resistance of the will against the benumbing effect of grief: "When sleeping my will is dormant. I

then cannot resist the weight on my heart. It seems to beat dull and low as if oppressed with cold. When I wake I resist that hopeless feeling. My consciousness resumes its sway, and I feel that I ought not to be weakened and ruined by the loss of a friend."

The fifth strophe is also reactionary; a feeling of resistance against the deadening effect of sorrow is expressed in the words: "Sometimes it seems wrong for me to endeavor to put my feelings into words. Words are so inadequate. Nevertheless the exercise of composing is a relief, the mechanical regularity of the lines has at least a distracting effect, though they infold the merest suggestion of the feeling."

Thus far the thought is strictly subjective, the yew tree itself becomes a part of the stupefied somberness of the writer's mind, but in the sixth strophe there is a recognition of influences from the outer world.

"Friends," he says, "write the usual common-places. One says that loss is common to the race.<sup>1</sup> As Hamlet says, 'Ay, madam, it is common' — so much the sadder. It is too common. A father pledges the health of his absent son. Just as he raises his hand the bullet passes through the heart of the absent one. A mother is waiting for the return of her sailor son. At this very moment his corpse is dropped into the sea. Somewhere a maiden is blushing arraying herself, innocently hoping to

please her lover. While she is doing so he is drowned crossing the ford. Is her grief or mine any the less because others have suffered before? Commonplace consolation fails utterly."

The seventh and eighth strophes contain but one thought, or rather one springs naturally out of the other.

"I go to his house in the early dawn, for I cannot sleep. I steal away to the door like a guilty thing as the day breaks. The noises of human life that begin to be heard are distasteful and inharmonious.

"A lover comes a long distance with exultant fondness to see his promised wife. He learns on arriving that she is far away from home. At once the place seems empty of all pleasure and brightness. The world seems so to me. Yet, as the other, walking disconsolate in the garden, may chance to find a flower she once cared for, so this little flower of poetry he once loved is cherished by me."

The ninth and tenth strophes are in a more subdued tone. They are addressed to the ship which is bringing home the body of Arthur Hallam.

"Bring him safely home, bring my Arthur, dear to me as the mother to the son, more than my brothers are to me, that he may rest in consecrated ground. We are soothed by the thought that he will lie beneath the sod of his own village in the religious center and heart of it."

Numbers 11, 12, 13, and 14 are very closely connected. The leading idea is the sense of infinity that is borne in on a sad heart by a calm morning, the feeling that the soul could go out of the body and traverse vast spaces, the unreality, and strangeness, and ever recurring newness of bereavement. They mark well one of the earlier phases of grief, a phase of exaltation closely connected with all periods of high-wrought feeling: "It is a peaceful morning, Nature expresses calm and peace, on this green plain, in the wide air, on the silver sea. There is dead calm, too, in that noble heart of his. I seem to be taken up by the great peaceful spirit of Nature. My spirit seems to leave the body and sweep over the rounded ocean to where the ship bringing him moves slowly forward, then to return here to the body. All things seem strange and unreal. Death and life are confused. If I should hear that you had arrived, and go to the wharf and find you unchanged and eager to hear about home, I should accept it calmly as we do things in a dream."

This state of tension induced by the expectation of receiving the body of his friend; this sympathy with the wider influences of Nature — the sunlight, the storm cloud, the winds; this disposition of the mind when under high-wrought expectation to overrun great spaces in imagination, to wish to go out of the body, this sublimated impatience, is one of the most vivid and one of the most true things in the poem. The poem is all true and the record

of actual mental experience. This restlessness not infrequently finds vent in exaggerated physical activity; it is a species of ecstatic delirium in which wild and whirling words come to the surface. Tennyson is too self-restrained and balanced an artist in temperament to utter the wild lyrical cry which would be the relief of the ardent spirit. He is the self-cultured modern man.

Nos. 15 and 16: Toward night the storm comes. With it grief assumes energy. "I can imagine your spirit fleeing before the storm cloud. How is it that sorrow is so different at different times? Is the sorrow in my heart a mere reflex of the moods of nature, or is my self-poise broken by the shock of grief so that any wind hurries me to and fro like a wreck obeying no rudder?"

Nos. 17, 18, 19, and 20: "The ship has arrived. May it be blest and fortunate forever. It has brought the precious dust. Henceforth let it be sacred. It is something that he is home. Let us hear the ritual. Would that I could give him my life. The Danube has given him to the Severn. Daily the little bed of the Wye is filled and made quiet by the tide from the Severn. It is hushed, as my anguish is; then it flows out and the stream runs in its former channel. The flood of grief sometimes flows from my heart, and I can speak a little. Just as in a house when the head is dead, the servants can talk, but the children are silent, for their hearts are full."

Nos. 21 to 28: "I think of him and put my thoughts in verse. Some say, 'a waste of time; there are earnest things to do.' They do not understand. They did not know him. I sing as a bird does whose cheerful note is changed because her little ones have been taken away. We walked the path of life for five years together — singing. The shadow called death took him. It waits for me somewhere on the path. Looking backward and forward on the path, how different it seems. Was it so beautiful? It was, for love irradiated it. Looking forward, it is dreary. Still, if I thought that I should in time forget my friend and reach the calm of indifference, I would rather die now. I envy not the mind unfettered by memory. 'Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all."

Nos. 28, 29, and 30: "The time draws near the birth of Christ." This is the first Christmas since his death. *In Memoriam* is a journal of the workings of grief on the soul. It passes over three Christmas festivals. The first is naturally pen- sive: "We weave the holly with trembling fingers, make vain pretense of gladness, with an awful sense of one mute shadow watching us." Yet, there is a touch of returning hope for this movement ends, "Rise happy morn, rise holy morn."

The thought journal for the next year, which runs from No. 31 to No. 76, is more hopeless in tone than anything that has gone before. Much



of it is very difficult to understand. It sounds like the pessimistic, settled melancholy of an older man. The cheerful or the somber aspects of nature are not alluded to. The man seems to live in the past. Grief is not so poignant, but it is more unrelieved. The poet begins by speaking of the return of Lazarus. "His sister is so happy that she never asks, 'Where wert thou, brother?' No subtle thought, no curious fears, intrude. 'Thou who hast been through the hell of doubts and hast come to have a shadowy vague trust in the Universal, do not disturb the childlike faith of your sister which rests in what seem to you to be unmeaning forms, but which to her have a divine significance.' I ought to be sure that there is such a thing as the immortal life, for otherwise there is no reasonable explanation of this world, there would be no choice or moral differences in this world. But, even put the case that we had positive evidence that death is the end-all of the person, could I not even then hug the delusion that love is true, or would the moanings of the endless sea of oblivion fill me with despondency? But why make a useless hypothesis? If we regarded death as final, spiritual love would never have existed, love would have been mere fellowship, or at best the animal element would have been the exclusive one. If there were no soul, there would have been no communion of souls, no yearning for the high friendship.

"Now, although these spiritual truths are a part

of our being, and therefore man unaided might have found them out, bless Christ who not only realized the spiritual life but embodied our spiritual needs in simple tales that the lowest may apprehend, so that the great creed is put in human expression, and touches even the savage man.

“Does the muse of divine wisdom reprove me for dwelling on these matters of deep import? I can only say that I am unworthy with my little art to speak of the great mysteries, but brooding over my friend’s memory and over what he said of spiritual matters, I repeat, murmuring, some of his suggestions. I am under the dominion of a dumb, benumbing sorrow. How can I sing of light matters? And if the emancipated spirits care for the remembrance of the living, he will joy to know that I put in verse some of the thoughts he uttered. . . . It would be better if we could look on the dead as we look on a sister who leaves home as a bride and goes to a new and wider life, whom we take leave of with seriousness yet without sorrow, who, though severed from her family, will renew her relations to humanity in the higher character and nobler dignity of matron and mother. But this may not be. You and I have parted in a different sense. I wander about the old places. You are in a strange country. You are in some undiscovered country.”

The remaining poems of this year are of the same nature; questionings, unsettled speculations as to the future, subtle in thought, suggestive and

delicate in expression. The heading lines of some of the strophes may serve to indicate the nature of the thought : —

If sleep and death be truly one.

How fares it with the happy dead ?

Be near me when my light is low.

Do we indeed desire the dead

Should still be near us at our side ?

Oh yet we trust that, somehow, good

Will be the final goal of ill.

Dost thou look back on what hath been ?

For an instant he admits that his grief has made him kindly, as one who has lost his sight takes up harmless diversions, listens with a patient smile to the prattle of his children, but in his mind evermore recalls the light he has lost. Toward the end of this year he turns to this world again and to subjective feeling. The reflective phase is more cheerful, and the mourner's heart goes out to others more than it did a twelvemonth ago. The Christmas strophe is quite different, grief is not expressed, tears are dry though the regret is even deeper. Sorrow has receded into the past. It has been transmuted into a part of character. It is more permanent than it was when it was a feeling of ever present pain.

The poems of the next year, which run from Nos. 77 to 104, are marked by the sentiment ex-

pressed in the Christmas strophe. There is less brooding on the past, more influence from nature, and less morbid, subjective feeling. The New Year's bells have rung out the grief that saps the mind, the man begins to live in wider and more varied relations. He does not sit with his eye fixed on a distant point of the horizon. He sees the daisy at his feet, and the fruitful champaign between him and the vanishing point. He will again enter the sphere of human activity.

I will not shut me from my kind.

What profit lies in barren faith  
And vacant yearning?

The anniversary of his friend's birthday comes. The poet speaks of him with pride. Henceforth that is the keynote of his words, pride in his friend, thankfulness that he has known such a man, such a "high nature, amorous of good, but touched with no ascetic gloom." He magnifies and glorifies his friend's memory from the Christmas song *Ring out, Wild Bells* to the 129th strophe, which closes the round of grief. After an interval of six years comes the beautiful marriage hymn to his sister, in which he says that

Regret is dead, but love is more  
Than in the summers that have flown,  
For I myself with these have grown  
To something greater than before.

This beautiful ode fitly closes the dirge by linking it to the hope that is infolded in the future for the lovers.

*In Memoriam* is by no means merely a series of beautiful, detached poems on the same general subject, but each strophe has its place in the complete structure. It is a psychological journal recording the moods of a definite, spiritual experience, and it moves from point to point by delicate gradations. It opens with a presentation of the stunned, dazed feeling that follows bereavement when the mental shock distorts the mourner's view of nature, causing things to assume a strange aspect, the sunshine to seem cold and unfeeling, and all nature to seem hard and indifferent and unreal. The perceptions are at first sharpened, and take in many things overlooked before. Death has widened the universe. Then comes the period of sadness and loneliness when the spirit broods over the past, questions destiny, rebels against the lords of life, is introspective and retrospective. Then, as in healthy minds, comes the period when sorrow sinks into the character and is "molded in colossal calm" and transmuted into a cheerful seriousness, and it is no longer a pain to talk of the lost friend. The experience is in no way exceptional except that friendship like that between Tennyson and Hallam is rare, and the sympathy of living friends usually lightens or divides the burden of sorrow. The theme of *In Memoriam* has a close relation

to life, far closer than the general theme of *Lycidas* or *Adonais*.

These three dirges are all written by young men and all inspired by the deaths of young men. In none of the three cases was there anything to relieve the sense of an irreparable loss of a bright intelligence called away in early life before it had given the world more than promise. The wastefulness of premature death, the pitiableness of it, impresses the mind in all. The world is fortunate that in each case a poet could express in different strains a part of what humanity must feel for the premature death of a young man. That Tennyson's poem is more intimate and searching in its appeal, results from the fact that he is so much nearer to us. In no other modern language is there anything to compare to the three great English dirges. . . . We may receive a reasonable encouragement from the fact that the last expresses the broadest and most truly Christian philosophy.

*In Memoriam* was the task of several years, and what Rossetti calls "fundamental brainwork" is evident in it. Shorter commemorative poems called out by the death of some one whose character or public services had made him eminent — some "shining mark" loved by death — are numerous. Matthew Arnold's *Thyrsis*, the lament for his friend the young poet, Clough, is marked by genuine feeling to which all can readily respond. Swinburne's *Ave atque Vale*, on the death of the

French poet, Charles Baudelaire, is an appreciation of a perverted talent which in spite of its musical qualities and fine poetry does not appeal to the underlying instincts of humanity. His thirteen short stanzas *In Memory of Walter Savage Landor* are of exquisite construction : —

Back to the flower-town, side by side,  
The bright months bring,  
Newborn, the bridegroom and the bride,  
Freedom and spring.

The sweet land laughs from sea to sea,  
Filled full of sun ;  
All things come back to her, being free ;  
All things but one.

In many a tender wheaten plot  
Flowers that were dead  
Live, and old suns revive ; but not  
That holier head.

By this white wandering waste of Sea,  
Far North I hear  
One face shall never turn to me  
As once this year ;

Shall never smile and turn and rest  
On mine as there,  
Nor one most sacred hand be prest  
Upon my hair.

I came as one whose thoughts half linger,  
Half run before ;  
The youngest to the oldest singer  
That England bore.

I found him whom I shall not find  
Till all grief end,  
In holiest age our mightiest mind,  
Father and friend.

But thou, if anything endure,  
If hope there be ;  
O Spirit that man's life left pure,  
Man's death set free,

Not with disdain of days that were  
Look earthward now ;  
Let dreams revive the reverend hair,  
The imperial brow ;

Come back in sleep, for in the life  
Where thou art not  
We find none like thee. Time and strife  
And the world's lot,

Move thee no more ; but love at least  
And reverent heart  
May move thee, royal and released  
Soul, as thou art.

And thou his Florence, to thy trust  
Receive and keep,  
Keep safe his dedicated dust,  
His sacred sleep.



So shall thy lovers, come from far,  
Mix with thy name  
As morning star with evening star  
His faultless fame.

It is impossible to put in more perfect language the ordinary reflections that arise on the death of a distinguished man. But the great mystery does not rise on the imagination as it does in reading *Lycidas* or *Adonais* or *In Memoriam*.

The thought is not carried over into the possibilities of the future, the tremendous import of life is not suggested by the tense lines, seen only in the shadow of death, that run from one world into another. Everything is on the scale with which we measure daily experience, and this seems to indicate the distinction between the great dirge and memorial verse.

In our country, memorial verse has never risen to the great height though the serious expression of sorrow has inspired our poets to the utterance of many exquisite laments. Stedman's sonnet on Lincoln, Aldrich's verses on Ralph Keeler, Longfellow's farewell to Hawthorne and his sonnets to three friends, and many others will come to the mind of the reader. Emerson's *Threnody*, the lament for his young son, is so realistic as to be painful. The father says: —

The south wind brings  
Life, sunshine, and desire,

And on every mount and meadow  
Breathes aromatic fire ;  
But over the dead he has no power,  
The lost, the lost, he cannot restore ;  
And looking over the hills I mourn  
The darling who shall not return.

I see my empty house,  
I see my trees repair their boughs ;  
And he, the wondrous child,  
Whose silver warble wild  
Outvalued every pulsing sound  
Within the air's cerulean round,  
The hyacinthine boy for whom  
Morn might well break and April bloom, —  
The gracious boy, who did adorn  
The world whereinto he was born,  
And by his countenance repay  
The favor of the loving Day,  
Has disappeared from the Day's eye.

\* \* \* \* \*

And whither now, my truant wise and sweet,  
O, whither tend thy feet ?  
I had the right, few days ago,  
Thy steps to watch, thy place to know ;  
How have I forfeited that right ?  
Hast thou forgot me in a new delight ?

\* \* \* \* \*

On that shaded day  
Dark with more clouds than tempests are,  
When thou didst yield thy innocent breath  
In bird-like heavings unto death,

Night came and Nature had not thee,  
I said "we are mates in misery."  
The morrow dawned with needless glow ;  
Each snow bird chirped, each fowl must crow ;  
Each tramper started ; but the feet  
Of the most beautiful and sweet  
Of human youth had left the hill  
And garden.

After the father's lament the "deep heart" (of the universe) answers, giving such comfort as philosophy affords, which seems only to intensify our sense of the indifference of nature to human sorrow and of the useless waste and cruel wrong to humanity involved in the death of a child. Nor is the artistic form of the poem so beautiful as to be consoling simply by its beauty.

Nevertheless Emerson's *Threnody*, like all the poetry of sorrow, is educative in the highest sense, since it calls us away from our preoccupation with forms and appearances to serious reflection on the unknown reality.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE LYRIC AND SONG

THE word "lyric" has much the same indefinite range of meaning as the word "ode." Primarily a poetical composition fitted to be sung by a single voice, not recited or chanted, it is of necessity restricted to comparatively short compositions. (In consequence it admits no detailed narrative like the ballad.) It can present only the outline of a situation, and the personal impression made on the poet must give it emphasis. Its burden is largely emotional, and it should appeal to feelings common to the majority of mankind. The lyric must be musical in form since it is through musical form that emotion can be best expressed. Love is the most universal passion, and is so much the most frequent subject of lyrical expression that the word "lyric" is colored in the conception of most persons with the idea of joy and spontaneity. It is true that grief and the religious sentiment are also emotions which are naturally expressed in the terms of rhythmical harmony, but we usually call a religious lyric a hymn or a psalm, and the lyric of grief a lament or a dirge, as we call a lyric of

adventure a ballad. The lyrical element appears in passages of the Drama or Epic when personal feeling is expressed in musical words, as in Juliet's hymn to love in *Romeo and Juliet*, or the morning hymn of the lovers in the same play, or the parting of Hector and Andromache in the *Iliad*. We can speak of the hymn as a sacred lyric, the ode as a dignified and extended lyric, the ballad as a narrative lyric or popular lyric, the short elegy as the lyric of grief, and yet retain the word "lyric" un-supported by any adjective to mean a short poem full of joyous personal emotion expressed in musical form and usually adapted to the singing voice. In many cases the sonnet is lyrical in tone; Shakespeare's love sonnets are notably so, but a sonnet is a sonnet though frequently belonging to the general class of lyrical poetry and sometimes to that of reflective poetry.

The true lyric or song, in the modern sense, is the brief expression of subjective emotion: pathos, love, exultation, patriotism, or any feeling uppermost in the mind of the singer. It should have some energy and variety of movement though not necessarily of form, for the emotion proper to the lyric is not stationary — it has life and flow. The lyric arouses the emotional faculties, whether it be read or sung, by bringing us in contact with the feeling of the poet, and thereby conduces to psychical health, quite as important a matter as physical health. It may appeal to the underlying racial

sympathies of the individual or only to those shared by the more reflective and imaginative, for its range of emotional expression is very wide, but it should always appeal to natural and healthy sentiment, though it may be admitted that a few lyrics of remarkable artistic quality deal with morbid and perverted themes. The lyric must be brief, for it arouses feeling by the presentation in poetic form of a simple idea without argument or narrative. It leaves to more ambitious forms the assembling of multifarious details into a unity. It is songlike in structure even when not specifically adapted to the singing voice. The lyric calls the soul from its solitude to that communion which is psychical life, but each soul responds with its own individual voice though each feels the delight of sympathy.

The lyric, therefore, is marked organically, by musical movement; rhetorically, by the personal figures, apostrophe and interrogation; grammatically, by the use of the personal pronouns; and metrically, by end-stopped lines and by the refrain. It begins, "Scots wha hae wi Wallace bled," or "Rock of Ages, cleft for me," or "Farewell, thou art too dear for my possessing," or "Never melt away, thou wreath of snow, that art so kind in grav-ing me"; its burden is, "I feel," not "I think." It has some of the qualities of the human voice; it penetrates, arouses, or charms. The lyrical quality is of the very essence of poetry, since it

{ transfers emotion from the singer to the hearer.  
/ The lyric is vivified by the personal note, — “the  
/ keen lyrical cry,” as Matthew Arnold called it. It  
must be written under excitement; frigidity is  
fatal to it. Except in those rare cases where men  
of great poetic powers have written songs which  
were the inspiration of a moment, though the  
result of years of thought and experience of life,  
it must be labored over, for no birth is without  
pain. It must be written under excitement, but  
must have the air of spontaneity. If to a sym-  
pathetic nature some power of musical expression  
in words is given, then we have the lyrical poet.  
That part of the world is his audience which sym-  
pathizes with his feelings. If, as in the case of  
Robert Burns, he appeals to the broad, genial  
emotions which are shared by all humanity, and  
his power of musical expression is of a high order,  
then the whole world is his audience. If, like  
Herrick, his feelings are bounded by a narrow  
horizon, his lovers will be fewer — perhaps only  
men of a certain amount of cultivation or knowl-  
edge of art will find pleasure in reading his verse.

In a broad sense all lyrics are songs; in a special-  
ized sense, only those lyrics which are set to music  
are songs. For a popular song the tune must be  
not difficult to catch, and not complicated, and  
accordant with the sentiment which, too, must not  
be subtle nor complicated. The time-beat must  
be emphatically marked, and the range within the

compass of ordinary voices. These requirements seem simple enough, but it is very difficult to meet them all, as is evident from the fact that we have yet no universally recognized national song. The *Star-Spangled Banner* is altogether too difficult. *Hail Columbia* lacks consecutiveness, and is, if anything, too emphatic. In both these and in others the diction is artificial. Of song writing, Barry Cornwall (Procter), whose songs were favorites with the last generation, says: "A song should be fitted to music, and, in fact, should become better for the accompaniment of music; otherwise it cannot be deemed essentially a song. Now, take ten out of every twelve lyrics that you find scattered over our periodical literature, and if you have an ear for music, endeavor to sing them to some well-known tune which they will apparently fit; the words will come in, but the accent, the fall of the musical phrase, will occur in the wrong place, and even if the first verse should go smoothly, the probability is that the second or third will halt most lamely. The secret of successful song writing is the happy combination of a fine musical ear with a poetic temperament. The song writer need not be a practical musician, but it will assist him wonderfully if he be one."

Mr. Procter seems to take a rather mechanical view of his art. The practical rules he might have noticed are: To invent a taking refrain, to use few words which end in a consonant that closes the



mouth, and few sibilants, and to choose words with open vowels wherever possible. It may be questioned whether a fine musical ear is necessary to a song writer. An ear for time and for vocal melodic effects is necessary, but that is quite a different thing. Shelley rather disliked music, and neither Coleridge nor Scott could catch a tune. Yet Scott wrote many fine songs; Shelley and Coleridge were masters of verbal melody, and some of Shelley's lyrics are well adapted for singing.

The true song writer needs something besides a "poetical temperament and a musical ear," and that something is the very thing which makes him a song writer. Browning knew much more about music than did Tennyson or Charles Kingsley, and was a lyric poet, but *Break, Break, Break*, and *The Three Fishers* are songs in a fuller sense than any of Browning's spirited lyrics are. It would seem as if the successful song writer must possess in addition to his other gifts, a certain folk element or instinctive knowledge of the heart of humanity, and a desire to appeal to it.

As a proof of the rarity of the song writer's gift it may be mentioned that during the Civil War, when the public mind was in a state of tense excitement, all our verse-writers naturally were desirous of writing a patriotic song. Many good lyrics were written full of patriotic energy, but except *Tramp, tramp, tramp, the Boys are Marching*, no one succeeded in embodying any one of the fea-

tures of the war — the march, the bivouac, the camp fire, the fight — in a song that expressed what the soldiers wished to sing. A song as fine as the *Marseillaise* would have been worth many regiments.<sup>1</sup>

Song writing, principally of a gay and amatory character, was much cultivated in the south of France as early as the tenth century, when the poetry of the North or Frankish part of the country

<sup>1</sup> In the end the soldiers of the 12th Massachusetts Regiment improvised a rude chorus, —

“ John Brown's body lies moldering in the grave.

His soul goes marching on.

Glory! glory! hallelujah, his soul goes marching on.”

This goes to a camp-meeting tune. Unmeaning verses were extemporized, and shouting this primitive war pæan was of great effect in keeping up the spirits and morale of the troops. Harry Brownell afterwards wrote some words to the air, and Mrs. Howe's fine *Battle Hymn of the Republic* goes to the same tune. *Just before the Battle, Mother, Tramp, tramp, tramp*, and the *Battle Cry of Freedom* were written and the music to them composed by George F. Root of Chicago. The last comes near to possessing the qualities of a great battle song. *Marching through Georgia* was composed by Henry C. Work of Chicago, who is the author also of *Wake Nicodemus*, *The Kingdom's Coming*, and *Babylon's Fallen*, the first the finest song produced in America. John S. Gibbons wrote *We are coming, Father Abraham, three hundred thousand more*, which, as sung by the Hutchinson family, was wonderfully effective. In the South, *Dixie*, set to a stirring tune, and *Maryland, my Maryland*, to the noble air of *Lauriger Horatius*, were effective songs. General Albert Pike of Arkansas wrote the best words to the last. The great power of songs in concentrating and intensifying sentiment was never better exemplified. The Northern songs had more the quality of folk literature than the Southern ones, and perhaps it is as well that none are so good as to be immortal.

was largely epical in character, passing over in the course of time into the romantic. These influences extended to England, but lyrical poetry did not develop there till the sixteenth century, and its culmination coincides largely with that of the great dramatic period. It was governed almost entirely by Italian models, for song is indigenous and permanent in Italy. Wyatt and Surrey introduced not only the sonnet but the song into their country. The sonnet had much more of a lyrical character in England in the Elizabethan age than it has now. The form then embodied an energetic emotion and not merely a description or some quiet moralizing as is so frequently the case at present. Spenser's, Sidney's, and Shakespeare's sonnets are almost invariably lyrical in expression. The singing voice, too, seems to have been a more general gift than it is now. (The Elizabethan age was lyrical as well as dramatic, and the lyrical impulse persisted after the dramatic impulse was exhausted in the seventeenth century.) Songs, some of them of great musical beauty, were inserted in many of the plays as the natural culmination of the dialogue. The lyrics of the time, seen in Professor Arber's reprints and Mr. Bullen's two volumes entitled *Lyrics from the Song Books of the Elizabethan Age* are nearly all of songlike quality. Mr. Symonds says of them: "For the purposes of singing they are exactly adequate, being substantial enough to sustain and animate the notes, and yet so slight as not to overburden

them with too much reflection and emotion. We feel that they have arisen spontaneously from the natural, facile marrying of musical words to musical phrases; they are the right and fitting counterpart to vocal and instrumental melody, limpid, liquid, never surcharging the notes which need them as a vehicle with complexities of fancy, involutions of thought, or the disturbing tyranny of vehement passions." In the preface to one of the song books, Byrd — there is something appropriate in the name — wrote, "Benign reader, here is offered unto thy courteous acceptance music of sundry sorts, and to content divers humours." So we have sacred songs, love songs in every key, pastorals, humorous songs, originals, and translations from the Italian. The following illustrates the chivalrous note, at once simple and elevated, of the love songs : —

There is a lady sweet and kind ;  
Was never face so pleasing to my mind :  
I did but see her passing by,  
And yet I love her till I die.

Her gesture, motion, and her smiles,  
Her wit, her voice, my heart beguiles,  
Beguiles my heart I know not why,  
But yet I love her till I die.

Her free behavior, winning looks,  
Will make a lawyer burn his books.

I touched her not, alas not I,  
And yet I love her till I die.

Cupid is winged and doth range  
Her country so my love doth change,  
But change she earth or change she sky,  
Yet will I love her till I die.

The expression "free behavior" is used in the old sense, and means a kind, genial manner. So, the knight in Chaucer "loved Freedom and Curteisye."

The following based upon Horace's ode, "*Justum et tenacem propositi virum*," is generally ascribed to Francis Bacon; if with justice, the Shakespeare-Bacon proposition needs no further refutation:—

The man of life upright,  
Whose guiltless heart is free  
From all dishonest deeds  
Or thought of Vanity,

The man whose silent days  
In harmless joys are spent,  
Whom hopes cannot delude  
Nor sorrow discontent,

That man needs neither towers  
Nor armor for defense,  
Nor secret vaults to fly  
From thunder's violence.

He only, can behold  
With unaffrighted eyes  
The horrors of the deep  
And terrors of the skies.

Thus scorning all the cares  
That faith or fortune brings,  
He makes the heaven his book,  
His wisdom heavenly things.

Good thoughts his only friends,  
His wealth a well-spent age,  
The Earth his sober inn,  
And quiet pilgrimage.

The songs in the dramas of the period and many of those printed in volumes of poetry have the same ease and naturalness as these, but usually much more rhythmic and emotional life. The songs in Shakespeare's plays illustrate the qualities of the true lyric. Among the best known is the song of Amiens in *As You Like It* : —

Under the greenwood tree,  
Who loves to lie with me,      ✓  
And tune his merry note  
Unto the sweet bird's throat —  
Come hither, come hither, come hither !  
Here shall he see  
No enemy  
But winter and rough weather.

Who doth ambition shun,  
 And loves to live i' the sun,  
 Seeking the food he eats  
 And pleased with what he gets,  
 Come hither, come hither, come hither !  
 Here shall he see.

No enemy,  
 But winter and rough weather.

The other song of the same actor is:—

Blow, blow, thou winter wind ;  
 Thou art not so unkind  
 As man's ingratitude.  
 Thy tooth is not so keen,  
 Because thou art not seen,  
 Although thy breath be rude.  
 Heigh ho ! sing heigh ho ! unto the green holly !  
 Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly ;  
 Then heigh ho — the holly !  
 This life is most jolly.

Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky ;  
 That dost not bite so nigh  
 As benefits forgot ;  
 Though thou the waters warp,  
 Thy sting is not so sharp  
 As friend remembered not.

Heigh ho ! sing heigh ho ! unto the green holly !  
 Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly, etc.

Ariel's songs in the *Tempest*, *Full Fathom five thy Father lies* and *Where the Bee sucks, there suck I* are as dainty and spritelike as the fairy himself,

and the dirge in *Cymbeline*, *Fear no more the Heat o' the Sun*, is so appropriate to the setting that it is difficult to understand how one hundred years later Mr. William Collins's lines were substituted for it.

For instance, Shakespeare wrote in his manly way the song that is put into the mouths of the strong, young men : —

Fear no more the heat o' the sun,  
Nor the furious winter's rages ;  
Thou thy worldly task hast done,  
Home are gone and ta'en thy wages ;  
Golden lads and girls all must,  
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

The song ends : —

Quiet consummation have,  
And renowned be thy grave.

This dirge is perhaps not so beautiful as the one sung by the clown in *Twelfth Night*, but it has the ring of hearty, honest feeling ; the other is romantic as it might well be, since the clown merely sings it to gratify the Duke, who loves music in a luxurious way. It begins : —

Come away, come away, death ;  
And in sad cypress let me be laid ;  
Fly away, fly away, breath ;  
I am slain by a fair, cruel maid.  
My shroud of white, stuck all with yew,  
O prepare it.

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My part of death, no one so true,  
Did share it.

But the real feeling and simplicity of the dirge in *Cymbeline* is far above Mr. Collins's verses, smooth and musical as they are. He wrote in the eighteenth century :—

To fair Fidele's grassy tomb  
Soft maids and village hinds shall bring  
Each opening sweet of earliest bloom,  
And rifle all the breathing spring.

No wailing ghost shall dare appear  
To vex with shrieks this quiet grove,  
But shepherd lads assemble here  
And melting virgins own their love.

Each lonely scene shall thee restore,  
For thee the tear be duly shed,  
Beloved till life could charm no more,  
And mourned till pity's self be dead.

These are very beautiful verses, but compared to the original they illustrate the difference between the real and the simulated in art. One of the young men in *Cymbeline*—princes ignorant of their birth—says,—

with fairest flowers,  
Whilst summer lasts, and I live here, Fidele,  
I'll sweeten thy sad grave : Thou shalt not lack  
The flower that's like thy face, pale primrose ; nor

The azured harebell like thy veins, no, nor  
The leaf of eglantine, whom not to slander  
Out-sweetened not thy breath : the ruddock would  
With charitable bill — . . .

. . . bring thee all this ;

Yea, and furred moss besides, when flowers are none,  
To winter-ground thy corse.

The other answers : —

Prithee, have done ;

And do not play in wench-like words with that  
Which is so serious. Let us bury him  
And not protract with admiration what  
Is now due debt.

Mr. William Collins must have read these words,  
yet he proceeds to do exactly what Guiderius warns  
him not to do : —

play in wench-like words with that  
Which is so serious.

Again, when Arviragus proposes to sing the dirge,  
Guiderius says : —

I cannot sing : I'll weep, and word it with thee,  
For notes of sorrow out of tune are worse  
Than priests and fanes that lie.

This, too, might have arrested the pen of the  
redacteur, himself a protestant against the conven-  
tional manner of the followers of Pope. There are  
many who do not like the whole truth, and nothing

but the truth, in art. They love the partial truth — the truth plus so many fashionable ornaments that they do not feel the rebuke which sincerity always gives to affectation. For them the statement : —

Golden lads and girls all must,  
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust,

is altogether too brutal and democratic ; but —

Beloved till life could charm no more  
And mourned till pity's self be dead,

is charmingly pathetic. It must be admitted that there is something very taking in insincerity and affectation if it is not compared with truth. So powerful is art that it justifies itself and sometimes excuses deceit. But when based on reality it is the great interpreter, its beauty intensified and its significance deepened by sincerity, earnestness, vision.

The dramatists of the Elizabethan period treated classic themes with lyrical freedom. The following is from the play, *Alexander's Feast*, by John Lyly : —

Cupid and my Campaspe played  
At cards for kisses ; Cupid paid.  
He stakes his quiver, bows, and arrows,  
His mother's doves and team of sparrows ;  
Loses them, too ; then down he throws  
The coral of his lip — the rose  
Growing on's cheek (but none knows how)  
With these the crystal of his brow,

And then the dimple of his chin ;  
And these did my Campaspe win.  
At last he set her both his eyes ;  
She won, and Cupid blind did rise.  
Oh, love, has she done this to thee,  
What shall, alas, become of me ?

Ben Jonson was ponderous enough, — physically and mentally, — but occasionally his touch was as light as that of the born lyrists. Songs formed a part of those complicated spectacular pageants called masks, which were so popular at the court of James I. and his son Charles I. The following is from *Cynthia's Revels* : —

Queen and huntress chaste and fair,  
Now the sun is laid to sleep,  
Seated in thy silver chair,  
State in wonted manner keep ; —  
Hesperus entreats thy light,  
Goddess excellently bright.

Earth, let not thy envious shade  
Dare itself to interpose,  
Cynthia's shining orb was made  
Heaven to clear when day did close :  
Bless us then with wished sight,  
Goddess excellently bright.

Lay thy bow of pearl apart,  
And thy crystal-shining quiver,  
Give unto the flying hart  
Space to breathe, how short soever ;

Thou that mak'st a day of might,  
Goddess excellently bright.

Perhaps his most attractive song is the well-known one : —

Drink to me only with thine eyes,  
And I will pledge with mine,  
Or leave a kiss but in the cup  
And I'll not look for wine.  
The thirst that from the soul doth rise  
Doth ask a cup divine,  
But might I of Jove's nectar sup  
I would not change for thine.

The verses on Mary Sidney, Lady Pembroke, the mother of William Herbert, Shakespeare's patron, to whom some of the sonnets were once supposed to be addressed, were erroneously attributed to Ben Jonson, but are by William Browne. They are well known, but the turn of the last three lines of the first stanza is so perfect that no excuse need be made for quoting them : —

Underneath this marble hearse  
Lies the subject of all verse ;  
Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother.  
Death, ere thou hast slain another,  
Wise and good and fair as she,  
Time shall throw his dart at thee.

All the devices of the art, the refrain, the repeat, and the chorus, were charmingly employed

in the songs of the period. The refrain consists of words repeated at intervals, but having a grammatical connection with the context. The repetend consists of words repeated in immediate sequence for emotional or musical emphasis, and the chorus of words — sometimes unmeaning ones — repeated at the end of the stanza. Thus Dekker sings: —

Art thou poor yet hast thou golden slumbers?

O sweet content!

Art thou rich yet is thy mind perplexed?

O punishment!

Dost laugh to see how fools are vexed

To add to golden numbers, golden numbers?

O sweet content, O sweet, O sweet, content!

Work apace, apace, apace,

Honest labor bears a lovely face.

Then hey, noney, noney! hey noney, noney.

Canst drink the waters of the crisped spring?

O sweet content!

Swim'st thou in wealth, yet sink'st in thine own tears?

O punishment!

Then he that patiently Want's burden bears,

No burden bears, but is a king, a king.

O sweet content, O sweet, O sweet, content!

Work apace, apace, apace,

Honest labor wears a lovely face.

Then hey noney, noney! hey noney, noney.

The words "Golden numbers, golden numbers," are a repetend. "O sweet content" and "O pun-

ishment" are refrains, and the words "Then hey noney, noney!" are rather a poor chorus. Sir Thomas Wyatt uses the refrain very skillfully in his verses *Forget Not Yet*, and in the following addressed to a lady:—

And wilt thou leave me thus?  
Say nay, say nay — for shame;  
To save thee from the blame  
Of all my grief and grame,  
And wilt thou leave me thus?  
Say nay — say nay.

And wilt thou leave me thus  
That hath loved thee so long  
In wealth and woe among,  
And is thy heart so strong  
As for to leave me thus?  
Say nay — say nay.

The lyric poetry of the Elizabethan age drew its inspiration from Italy, but at once began to develop in a free and natural manner. Wyatt and Surrey were the first to echo Italian song in England. Among the forms introduced were the madrigal, the canzone or ode, and the sonnet. Although the writers were scholars and the lyric is the poetry of culture, the technical names were used with little discrimination, and a poem was called a song, an ode, a madrigal, or a sonnet, with little reference to the original significance of the title. A madrigal, for instance, is an epigrammatic lyric

normally consisting of eight or eleven lines, rhyming *abb, acc, dd*, or *abb, acc, add, ee*. In Wyatt's poems a number approximate to the true form, but only two are exact. But not more than one quarter of the poems called by the Elizabethans "madrigals" even approximate to the Italian form, and the term was applied to any short poems set to music. As time went on, novel meters were invented, combinations of long and short lines and new rhyme schemes tending sometimes to the artificial, but sometimes of happy freshness and vivacity. The Elizabethans "borrowed the garb but not the clothes" of the Italians, and the foreign models furnished hints to be developed, and not always forms to be slavishly copied. They adhered, however, to regular stanzas, almost a necessity for verses to be sung, unless by a trained chorus. The following "madrigal," 1593, is in pure Italian form except that the lines should all be of the same number of feet:—

Say gentle nymphs that tread these mountains,  
Whilst sweetly you sit playing,  
Saw you my Daphne straying

Along your crystal fountains?  
If that you chance to meet her,  
Kiss her and kindly greet her;

Then these sweet garlands take her,  
And say from me I never will forsake her.



Some idea of the variety and melody of the meters may be gathered from the songs already cited. The impression would be strengthened by reading more, especially those of Shakespeare. The meters seem to have been hit upon in a fortunate moment and not studiously invented. What could be happier than the movement of the following from a play of Robert Greene's, about 1590 :—

Ah, what is love? It is a pretty thing,  
As sweet unto a shepherd as a king;  
And sweeter too :  
For kings have cares that wait upon a crown,  
And cares can make the sweetest love to frown.  
Ah then, ah then !

If country loves such sweet desires gain,  
What lady would not love a shepherd swain ?

His flocks are folded, he comes home at night,  
As merry as a king in his delight,  
And merrier too : ✓

For kings bethink them what the state require,  
Where shepherds careless carol by the fire.

Ah then, ah then !  
If country loves such sweet desires gain,  
What lady would not love a shepherd swain ?

Frequently, however, the Elizabethans held a closer and more personal relation to nature than the pastoral fiction admits. The following sung by Thomas Heywood, from a play acted about 1605, has the merit of simplicity and directness :—

Pack clouds away, and welcome day ;  
With night we banish sorrow :  
Sweet air, blow soft, mount, larks, aloft,  
To give my love good-morrow !  
Wings from the wind to please her mind,  
Notes from the lark I'll borrow.  
Bird, prune thy wing — nightingale, sing  
To give my love good-morrow ;  
To give my love good-morrow,  
Notes from them all I'll borrow.

Wake from thy nest, robin red-breast,  
Sing, birds, in every furrow,  
And from each hill let music shrill  
Give my fair love good-morrow !  
Blackbird and thrush in every bush,  
Stare, linnet, and cock-sparrow,  
You pretty elves, amongst yourselves  
Sing my fair love good-morrow.  
To give my love good-morrow,  
Sing, birds, in every furrow.

The "shepherd swain" referred to in Greene's song is not a real shepherd like those that "fed their flocks by night," but the conventionalized shepherd of "pastoral" poetry dating from the days of Virgil, if not from a much earlier period. The "pastoral fiction" in which men and women appear as impossible shepherds and shepherdesses feeding impossible flocks in artificial meadows or sheltering them in artificial groves, has colored

poetry, prose, and the drama, giving us some charming pictures with a very remote but very delicate relation to real life. To say nothing of lyrics like Marlowe's *Come live with me and be my Love*, Spenser's *Shepheard's Calendar*, or Fletcher's drama, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, and many other poems where the machinery is of strict pastoral construction, the pastoral tone, here and there, gives charm to *As You Like It*, Milton's *Comus*, and Sidney's *Arcadia*. The pastoral fiction and the romantic, chivalric fiction were two literary modes of representing life in beautiful and fanciful forms now lost. The pastoral fiction appeared occasionally in songs for nearly two centuries and was not entirely disused till after the French Revolution.

After we leave the sixteenth century, the character of the lyric as well as that of the drama gradually changes. There is of course continuity; we cannot say that at any one point the sixteenth century song becomes the seventeenth century lyric. The song from Milton's pastoral mask, *Arcades*, is as fresh and musical as any of the songs of the Elizabethans, and it was not written till the second quarter of the century was well under way:—

O'er the smooth enameled green,  
Where no print of step hath been,  
Follow me as I sing,  
And touch the warbled string,

Under the shady roof  
Of branching elm, star-proof,<sup>1</sup>  
Follow me.  
I will bring you where she sits,  
Clad in splendor as befits  
Her deity.  
Such a rural queen  
All Arcadia hath not seen.

The songs in Fletcher's dramas and in Jonson's masks are inferior to those in Shakespeare's only, and Fletcher died in 1625 and Jonson in 1637. Still the time was growing reflective. The questions of civil and personal right, and of religious duty which drew Milton from the worship of poetry, and removes him by so wide an interval from the no less pure-minded Spenser, were gradually assuming more and more importance in the minds of men of the first intellectual rank. The enthusiasm with which men first met the new learning and assimilated the beautiful forms of the Renaissance changed to the sober admiration of fuller scholarship not untinctured with professionalism. When the new continent was explored and charted, it lost some of the full romantic beauty the first discoverers found, and this can never meet the eyes of later voyagers.

<sup>1</sup> The English elm is really "star-proof." The adjective could not be applied to an American elm. Poets of the rank of Milton, Wordsworth, and Tennyson do not use words because they sound pretty, unless they are essentially true.

For these general reasons we find the Elizabethan lyric losing its early spontaneity in the latter part of the seventeenth century. In technical variety and perfection of workmanship, there is no falling off for many years, but the thought is more epigrammatic and mature, and painstaking is more evident. Herrick, 1591-1634, is unrivaled in the construction of lyrical meters, but the singing quality is less evident in his lines than in those that have been quoted from his predecessors. The quality of dainty precision begins to take the place of the quality of spontaneity. He sings less like a bird and more like a trained vocalist, there is more intellectuality and less symbolism or musical meaning in his verse. The following extracts from Herrick's *Hesperides* will illustrate the gradual change of tone: —

#### CHERRY RIPE

Cherry-ripe, ripe, ripe, I cry  
 Full and fair ones ; come and buy ;  
 If so be you ask me where  
 They do grow? I answer there ✓  
 Where my Julia's lips do smile ;  
 There's the land or cherry isle,  
 Whose plantations fully show  
 All the year where cherries grow.

#### UPON JULIA'S HAIR FILLED WITH DEW

Dew sat on Julia's hair,  
 And spangled too,

Like leaves that laden are  
With trembling dew,  
Or glittered to my sight  
As when the beams  
Have their reflected light  
Danced by the streams.

These are as joyous and unpremeditated as any of Greene's or Dekker's or Shakespeare's songs. *Gather ye Rosebuds while ye may* has, too, all the melody of the early Elizabethans. The following, however, contain a neat little sentiment in dainty form. Their note is more modern, the writer has felt more highly developed literary impulses than those which molded his predecessors in the sixteenth century:—

HIS PRAYER TO BEN JONSON

When I a verse shall make,  
Know I have prayed thee,  
For old religion's sake,  
Saint Ben, to aid me.

Make the way smooth for me,  
When I, thy Herrick  
Honoring thee, on my knee  
Offer my lyric.

Candles I'll give to thee  
And a new altar;  
And thou, Saint Ben, shalt be  
Writ in my psalter.

## HIS LACHRIMÆ

Call me no more,  
As heretofore,  
The music of a feast ;  
Since now, alas  
The mirth that was  
In me is dead or ceased.

Before I went  
To banishment  
Into the loathed West,  
I could rehearse  
A lyric verse,  
And speak it with the best.

But time, Ai me !  
Has laid I see  
My organ fast asleep,  
And turned my voice  
Into the noise  
Of those that sit and weep.

Herrick is so consummate a lyric artist that it is hardly fair to quote only verses which illustrate his wit and metrical ingenuity. *Corinna's Going A-Maying*, or *To Daffodils*, or *To the Virgins*, illustrate his delightful talent more fully. The last runs : —

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,  
Old Time is still a-flying,  
And this same flower that smiles to-day,  
To-morrow will be dying.

The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun,  
The higher he's a-getting,  
The sooner will his race be run,  
The nearer he's to setting.

That age is best which is the first  
When youth and blood are warmer,  
But being spent the worse and worst  
Times still succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time  
And, while ye may, go marry ;  
For having lost but once your prime,  
You may forever tarry.

The tendency of the seventeenth-century lyrists to fanciful meters is exemplified in the poems of Francis Quarles, many of which are extremely ingeniously and intricately rhymed and by no means destitute of formal beauty. In one of them, entitled *Hieroglyphics*, the first lines of the stanzas are printed in italics, and if read consecutively make a neat little rhyming poem by themselves. In another the lines on the right hand are indented so as to make a set of steps. This is called the *Ladder of the Heart*. One of George Herbert's is printed in the form of an altar, and another, *Easter Wings*, is a rude approximation in form to the outstretched wings of a bird. These eccentricities do not belong to literary technic, and may be classed with rhymed acrostics, poems where the first words of the lines form a sentence, and other curiosities



of prosody as examples of odd ingenuity, — metrical science gone mad.

It must be steadily borne in mind that the change in lyrical tone during the seventeenth century was very gradual. We continually hear echoes of the Elizabethan lyric that sound as fresh and natural as the original song until we reach the age of Dryden. The decline of the drama was much more rapid. From Shakespeare through Fletcher, Middleton, Tourneur, and the rest, to Shirley, the descent occupied at most but forty years, and the drama of the Restoration is separated from that of 1600 by a greater gulf than separates the lyric of to-day from that contemporary with *As You Like It*. One reason for this is that a drama is dependent for success on a numerous clientele whose taste changes every generation, and lyrics may please only a select and scattered few whose literary standard remains high and unchanged. Another reason, no doubt, is that the disfavor into which the acting of plays fell led to a temporary legal interdiction. Again, a lyric is a slight thing, the coming to the surface of a musical thought from the heart of an individual, whereas a drama is produced only in a dramatic age. Through the seventeenth century, verses of true lyrical charm continued to appear. We find lyrical music in Edmund Waller's *On a Girdle and Go, Lovely Rose*, Lovelace's *To Lucrecia on going to the Wars*, Crashaw's *Wishes to his Supposed Mistress*, Sir John

Suckling's *Constancy*, George Herbert's *Virtue*, and many others. But at the end we are landed in the eighteenth century, when, in 1780, Blake could write with no cynical undervaluing of the song of his day in *Songs addressed to the Muses*:—

How have you left the ancient love  
That bards of old enjoyed in you !  
The languid strings do scarcely move,  
The sound is forced, the notes are few.

In the seventeenth-century lyric verse, the note of the "*vers de société*," gallant and courtly compliment not unmixed with persiflage from some gay and witty gentleman to a radiant beauty, a queen of society and temporary queen of his heart, begins to be heard. Society verse, though of course lyrical, has a distinctive tone of its own, enough so to warrant making it the subject of a separate chapter. The sound of this note, not as yet very distinct, heard in the verse of Lovelace and Suckling, in whom much of the sincerity of the Elizabethans survives, and quite distinctly in Prior's *Poems on Several Occasions* in the last decade of the century, is one of the indications of the wearing out of the original lyrical impulse.

In the eighteenth century enthusiasm was considered an undesirable and dangerous quality. Good sense and moderation were esteemed in literature and character. The classics, "the ancients," as they

were called, were regarded as standard models, not as sources of inspiration free to express itself in novel and luxuriant forms. Religious belief was a good-natured acquiescence in an institution of respectable antiquity or a yielding to a somber Calvinism, or, sometimes, a combination of both. Collateral with these was a very unattractive form of cynicism, not earnest enough to be nobly pessimistic nor imaginative enough to be mystical. All these characteristics are hostile to the free and joyous abandon of lyrical song and hardly less so to the intimate self-disclosure of the reflective lyric, and we find little of either in the age when Pope and Dr. Johnson are the admired authorities in poetry. The songs in Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* are too trifling to be dignified as lyrics though they are less coarse than those in Dryden's plays. They rise but little above the ordinary music-hall or "variety-show" song, and lack the popular element which gives some of the latter heartiness and significance. Goldsmith, a balladist from his boyhood, puts a couple of pretty verses into the *Vicar of Wakefield*, and some of Sheridan's in the *Duenna* are sprightly and, in their place, amusing. Goldsmith's lines contrasted with some of the Scotch ballads on the same situation show the difference between sentimentalism, or a fanciful treatment of a pathetic subject, and vigorous, imaginative realization. He treats the most tragic motif with no dramatic sincerity : —

When lovely woman stoops to folly  
And finds too late that men betray,  
What charm can soothe her melancholy,  
What art can wash her guilt away?

The only art her guilt to cover,  
To hide her shame from every eye,  
To give repentance to her lover  
And wring his bosom is — to die.

The theme of these sweetly modulated quatrains is general and the terms, as, "lovely woman," "folly," "melancholy," "guilt," "repentance," "wring his bosom," are all conventional—the stock words of the poets of a cultured age. In the Scotch song *O Waly, Waly*, the anguish of the betrayed girl finds direct personal realization in concrete terms. The difference is precisely the same as has been noted between Shakespeare's dirge in *Cymbeline* and Mr. Collins's version. One is of the eighteenth century, the other of the sixteenth.

O waly,<sup>1</sup> waly, up the bank,  
And waly, waly, down the brae,  
And waly, waly, yon burn-side,  
Where I and my love wont to gae.

I leaned my back unto an aik,  
I thought it was a trusty tree;  
But first it bowed, and syne it brake,  
Sae my true love did lyghtlie me.

<sup>1</sup> *Waly*, a word meaning, alas = welaway.

O waly, waly, but love be bonnie  
A little time while it is new ;  
But when 'tis auld it waxeth cauld  
And fades awa like morning dew.

O wherefore should I busk my head ?  
Or wherefore should I kame my hair ?  
For my true love has me forsook,  
And says he 'll never love me mair.

Now Arthur's seat shall be my bed,  
The sheets shall ne'er be fyled by me,  
Saint Anton's well shall be my drink,  
Since my true love has forsaken me.

Martinmas wind when wilt thou blaw,  
And shake the green leaves off the tree ?  
O gentle death when wilt thou come ?  
For of my life I am wearie.

'Tis not the frost that freezes fell,  
Nor blawing snaws inclemencie,  
'Tis nae sic cauld that makes me cry,  
But my love's heart grown cauld to me.

When we came in by Glasgow town,  
We were a comely sight to see,  
My love was clad in the black velvet,  
And I mysel in cramasie.

But had I wist before I kissed,  
That love had been sae ill to win,  
I'd locked my heart in a case of gold  
And pinned it with a silver pin.

Oh, oh ! if my young babe were born  
And set upon the nurse's knee,  
And I myself were dead and gone !  
And the green grass growin' over me.

Dr. Johnson's manner was conventional and his philosophy practical and limited. But his genuine sympathy with unpretentious worth makes his verses on Dr. Levett, the "friend of the poor," true poetry, though a lament rather than a lyric.

Well tried through many a varying year,  
See Levett to the grave descend,  
Officious, innocent, sincere,  
Of every friendless name the friend.

Yet still he fills Affection's eye,  
Obscurely wise and coarsely kind,  
Nor, lettered Arrogance, deny  
Thy praise to merit unrefined !

When fainting nature called for aid,  
And hovering death prepared the blow,  
His vigorous remedy displayed  
The power of art without the show.

In misery's darkest cavern known,  
His useful care was ever nigh,  
Where hopeless anguish poured his groan,  
And lonely want retired to die.

No summons mocked by chill delay,  
No petty gain disdained by pride —  
The modest wants of every day  
The toil of every day supplied.

His virtues walked their narrow round,  
Nor made a pause, nor left a void,  
And sure the Eternal Master found  
His single talent well employed.

The busy day — the peaceful night,  
Unfelt, uncounted, glided by;  
His frame was firm — his powers were bright  
Though now his eightieth year was nigh.

Then with no fiery throbbing pain  
No cold gradations of decay,  
Death broke at once the vital chain  
And freed his soul the nearest way.

In spite of some artificialities of diction like "cold gradations of decay," "hovering death prepared the blow," the writer's "grand old wisdom of sincerity" makes the figure of the humble practitioner distinct and significant, as much so as that of Dr. Primrose. The phrase "no cold gradations of decay" is in the happiest form of Johnsonese and fills the line admirably.

Even to enumerate the songs of Scotland would require many pages. That in a narrow strip of land, less than one hundred and fifty miles wide from sea to sea, men and women should for at least two hundred years compose songs and tunes in profusion, a large proportion of which are marked by lyrical beauty and are at once popular and poetic, is a remarkable phenomenon. The

people there are intensely though locally patriotic and are characterized by combativeness, adherence to preconceived ideas, and a hard, unyielding grip on the objective world. Their temperament seems as far removed as possible from what we usually consider artistic. But their song is delicately modulated and ranges from the plaintive through the gay and humorous to the broadly and coarsely realistic. To a great extent it is independent of literary fashions or poetic schools. Its authors came from all classes of society; it is written by farmers and shepherds like Burns and Hogg, or by gentlemen and ladies, like Walter Scott and Lady Nairn and Lady Ann Lindsay, but it is always racy of the soil, and in the line of the old tradition. Scottish song is by no means entirely dependent on Burns, for his work was largely filling out snatches of old songs, the words of which had become confused or partly forgotten, with a line here and there or a stanza or two of remarkable fitness. *Auld Lang Syne*, *My Love is like a Red, Red Rose*, and many others of his best-known songs are really "old jewels reset," but the setting is of exquisite workmanship. In no case did Burns invent a tune or even a meter; he transmuted old material as Shakespeare dramatized old stories. He is the best example in proof of the theory that folk-song, after repetition by generations, may be lifted by an inspired bard into the realm of permanent literature. Hardly less great



indignation makes the lines of the petted parlor singer thrill with genuine feeling:—

O, it sickens the heart to see bosoms so hollow,  
And friendship so false in the great and high born,  
To think what a long line of titles may follow  
The relics of him who died friendless and lorn.

How proud they can press to the funeral array  
Of him whom they shunned in his sickness and sorrow,  
How bailiffs shall take his last blanket to-day  
Whose pall shall be held up by nobles to-morrow.

Was this then the fate of that high-gifted man,  
The pride of the palace, the bower, and the hall,  
The orator, dramatist, minstrel who ran  
Through each mode of the lyre and was master of all?

Whose mind was an essence compounded with art  
From the finest and best of all other men's powers,  
Who ruled like a wizard the world of the heart  
And could call up its sunshine or bring down its  
showers!

Whose humor as gay as the fire-fly's light  
Played round every subject and shone as it played,  
Whose wit in the combat as gentle as bright  
Ne'er carried a heart-stain away on its blade.

Whose eloquence brightening whatever it tried,  
Whether reason or fancy, the gay or the grave,  
Was as rapid, as deep, and as brilliant a tide  
As ever bore freedom aloft on its wave.

Sincerity and lyrical abandon to the storm and stress of the inner life mark the verse of Shelley. It is not so much the object as his emotion in the presence of the object, that is the burden of his verse. Even the great elegy which opens with an invocation to the "mighty mother," the principle of life and beauty, the greatest of abstractions, closes with an almost hysterical burst of personal emotion :—

The breath whose might I have invoked in song  
Descends on me ; my spirit's bark is driven  
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng  
Whose sails were never to the tempest given ;  
The massy earth and sphered skies are riven ;  
I am borne darkly, fearfully afar ;  
Whilst burning through the inmost veil of Heaven  
The soul of Adonais like a star  
Beacons from the above where the eternal are.

In the *Ode to the West Wind* he exclaims :—

Make me thy lyre even as the forest is,  
What if my leaves are falling like its own !  
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies  
Will take from both a deep autumnal tone  
Sweet, though in sadness. Be thou, spirit fierce,  
My spirit ! Be thou me, impetuous one !

This is the true lyrical rapture, the "waking to ecstasy" which makes so many of Shelley's shorter poems expressive when set to music though he lacked the technical skill of the song writer.

His verse brings us into the presence of an intense personality, spritelike, unreasonable, wayward, imparting to everything the color of a mood, and impelled to reveal itself in rhythmical words. The mood is not joyous, sometimes not altogether wholesome and reasonable, but it is disclosed in poetic form, the more interesting because elusive. For these reasons Shelley's shorter poems are typical of lyric verse.

The lyrical note is heard in nearly all the poetry of the nineteenth century. Tennyson's *Maud* attempts the difficult task of presenting all the phases of a tragedy in a sequence of short poems. The motive of the tragic history may lack depth and nobility, but *Come into the Garden*, *Maud*, and *I have led her Home* are songs of exquisite beauty. The songs in the *Princess* and *Break, Break, Break*, and many other of Tennyson's shorter poems down to *Crossing the Bar* are permanent additions to the golden treasury of English verse, though it might be objected that the poet seems too detached from his work for the personal appeal of the lyric. Browning "thinks too much" and too subtly, but is lyrical in attitude, so that his manly personality is evident, even in his most unsong-like verse, and many of his shorter poems are lyrical in directness of address, though as far removed from the ordinary song as it is possible to conceive. In *Mandalay* Rudyard Kipling has given the world a new love song not soon to be forgotten.

Of our American poets, Poe is the most lyrical, but his predisposition to the abnormal and semi-insane renders his verse almost too exceptional to be classified. *The Haunted Palace* appeals so strongly to the horrified sympathy with which we regard a ruined mind, and uses musical effects so wonderfully that it must be ranked as a great lyric in spite of a suggestion of insincerity. In fact, its excellence is rather musical than poetic.

### THE HAUNTED PALACE

In the greenest of our valleys  
By good angels tenanted,  
Once a fair and stately palace —  
Radiant palace — reared its head.  
In the monarch Thought's dominion  
It stood there;  
Never seraph waved a pinion  
Over fabric half so fair.

Banners, yellow, glorious, golden,  
On its roof did float and flow,  
This — all this — was in the olden  
Time long ago!  
And every gentle air that dallied  
In that sweet day  
Along the ramparts, plumed and pallid,  
A winged odor went away.

Wanderers in that happy valley  
Through two luminous windows saw

Spirits moving musically  
To a lute's well-tuned law,  
Round about a throne, where sitting,  
Porphyrogene,  
In state his glory well befitting,  
The ruler of the realm was seen.

And all with pearl and ruby glowing  
Was the fair palace door,  
Through which came flowing, flowing, flowing,  
And sparkling evermore,  
A troop of echoes whose sweet duty  
Was but to sing  
In voices of surpassing beauty  
The wit and wisdom of their king.

But evil things in robes of sorrow  
Assailed the monarch's high estate,  
Ah, let us mourn, for never morrow  
Shall dawn upon him, desolate,  
And round about his home the glory  
That blushed and bloomed,  
Is but a dim-remembered story  
Of the old time entombed.

And travelers now within that valley,  
Through the red-litten windows see  
Vast forms that move fantastically  
To a discordant melody,  
While like a ghastly, rapid river,  
Through the pale door,  
A hideous throng rush out forever,  
And laugh, but smile no more.

Through the utterances of Longfellow, Whittier, and Lowell run a vein of moral seriousness and a sense of responsibility which, though admirable qualities for the conduct of life, are too weighty for the lyrical muse. Longfellow's gentle pathos tends to the reflective, and to him and Whittier the right and wrong of a question were of overwhelming importance. Neither is much preoccupied with his own individual view of the world as beautiful and joyous, but rather with his notion of the world as it ought to be. Lowell is eloquent and witty rather than musical. It is evident that our New England poets are not members of a community in which singing is an habitual means of expression for more than religious emotion. It may be that lyric verse will appear in the southern part of our country, where Nature is less hostile to man than she seems to be in New England. Of the popular poetry out of which it must spring, we have almost nothing. Music, especially vocal music, has become so complicated and refined an art as to be confined to semi-professionals, and what might be called popular poetry, the songs which pass from the music halls to the streets, is wanting in simplicity and sincerity as well as in native and original melody. In quality it is far removed from the crudest song Burns heard in his childhood.

Nevertheless, Mr. Stedman's *American Anthology* contains many vigorous lyrics not "sicklied o'er by the pale cast of thought" and not harking back to

the psalter or the hymnal. The encouragement we can gather from them is confirmed by Miss Marguerite Merington's verse :—

There is a race from eld descent,  
Of heaven by earth in joyous mood,  
Before the world grew wise and bent  
In sad, decadent attitude.  
To these each waking is a birth  
That makes them heir to all the earth,  
Singing for pure abandoned mirth,  
Non nonny, non, hey nonny no.

\* \* \* \* \*

Successful ones will brush these by,  
Calling them failures as they pass.  
What reck they this who claim the sky  
For roof, for bed the cosmic grass !  
When failures all we come to lie,  
The grass betwixt us and the sky,  
The gift of gladness will not die !  
Sing nonny, non, hey nonny no.

## CHAPTER VII

### SOCIETY VERSE AND THE VERSE OF CULTURE

THE poems which come under the head of *Society Verse* or *Vers de Société* are distinguished by subject-matter and standpoint rather than by form. They are lyrical, but the mood they embody is not earnest nor pathetic nor gay with the true lyrical feeling, nor have they the peculiar musical character of songs. They are of no great length, for to be in the least tedious is fatal to the writer's aim. They are good-humored in tone, and have the unmistakable note of good society; an intelligent interest in trifles, a content with the surface of things, an ignoring of the real nature and meaning of appearances, and an equal avoidance of the serious and of the tiresome. A large part of life is concerned with things as they seem, not with things as they really are or as they ought to be. And society, using the word in its narrow sense for people whose main occupation is to find means of entertainment, has at its best the charm of elegance, gayety, and superficial propriety. If it is looked at with seriousness, it may become the theme of the satirist. But its pleasing surface does not necessarily conceal



corruption, vulgarity, and sordid ambitions. It is composed of men and women; and men and women, even under the dominion of conventional law, which regulates manners without regard to ultimate principles, present some charming and kindly aspects.

11. Society verse dwells in a light and airy manner on these agreeable aspects, especially as they are brought out by the relations between the sexes. It ignores what may lie behind or beyond. It is written by men of a happy mood who enjoy to-day, are careless of to-morrow, and do not regard yesterday as wasted because it is a day of pleasure past. It requires in those who write it literary culture, or at least delicate literary feeling, lively susceptibility to impressions from the social world, and the power of fixing those impressions in finished verse. It must not be tainted by cynicism nor by any but the most subacid and smiling satire. Its spirit is that of refined comedy, free from all exaggeration or burlesque, and restricted to a limited field of gay and graceful sentiment. Had Mercutio been a poet, he would have written society verse.

The art necessary to give distinction to society verse cannot be regarded as inferior because its subject-matter is a highly artificial condition. Art is a realization of the essence of anything, a striving for perfection, and perfection is absolute. The subject-matter of an epic may be greater in interest, weight, and dignity than the subject-matter of society verse. The thought may range over wider

interests, the mood be deeper and more serious, the humanity of a far wider scope, but the beauty of the short verse may be quite as great as that of the longer one with its episodes and its slow movement to the catastrophe, its hints at the underworld, and its recognition of moral law. Furthermore, the beauty of little things is much more easily comprehended than is the beauty of great things. It may require long study, and some knowledge of the development of philosophic and theological thought, before one can appreciate the reach and great proportions of *Paradise Lost*. But the unity of a short poem, characterized by gayety, airiness, and good humor, can be appreciated in a few moments and is in its way entirely satisfying. As far as beauty is concerned, the humming bird is no wise inferior to the eagle, and the humming bird is darting about among the flowers on the earth, whereas the eagle is high in the air or on the top of a mountain, where he is inaccessible to all but the most persevering and daring, though doubtless very impressive and in keeping with the lonely rocks. Art is an embodiment of the beautiful within the range of our perceptive faculties, and a cameo and a statue of Jupiter Olympus are equally works of art and may give equal pleasure. Mental contact with the nobler theme may be more elevating, but grace, precision, and delicacy of handling exert a refining influence even when exerted on trifles.

The tone of society verse may safely be regarded as derived originally from the odes of Horace, though the civilization of Rome was so radically different from that of modern Christendom. The odes and epistles of the Latin poet are distinguished by the charm of urbanity, the appearance of careless ease — the “*curiosa felicitas*” — the mental alertness and polite geniality which distinguish the best specimens of the type, society verse. His virtues are the conventional virtues of the man of the world — patriotism, friendliness, decorum, courage. His pleasures are the social pleasures — good fellowship, intelligent and sprightly conversation while a flask of Falernian cools in the shade; his love, a frank admiration of beauty, and hearty sympathy with frolicsome youth. Wherever he is he will love “*Lalagen, dulce ridentem, dulce loquentem*,” but not with the lyric intensity of the love of Catullus for Lesbia. He is the Roman gentleman and man of letters, responsive to the social instincts within the limits of good form and gifted with the light and spirited touch of the artist. His odes attain all the excellencies of society verse, and to translate and paraphrase them has been a favorite exercise with Englishmen since the seventeenth century. His manner has been copied and his attitude to life assumed as far as possible by many modern writers.

Though Horace is the first exemplar of a poet writing finished verse full of good sense and wit

applied to matters in which cultured people were interested, there is a note in modern society verse not heard in his *Carmina*. The social institution of chivalry dominated Europe from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century. One of its tenets was an exaggerated, fantastic, artificial worship of woman, based, like all the conceptions of chivalry, on a noble ideal but degenerating in time into a set of affected and ridiculous expressions. The theory had immense effect on manners and literature from Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* down to Sidney's *Arcadia* and later. Indeed, exaggerated and formal courtesy and theoretical devotion to woman is, in a subdued and modified form, part of the inherited mental constitution of the modern gentleman. The note of chivalric and deferential gallantry, half whimsical and half genuine, is still heard — perhaps only hinted — in modern society verse, and is of course not to be found in the odes of Horace. 7.

The “nimble wits” of England have for nine centuries drawn much from France, the “sweet enemy” of Philip Sidney and the arbiter of taste for Polonius. England learned the society drama from the comedy of Molière and epigrammatic comment on manners from the writers of the court of Louis XIV. The flippant and cynical gallantry of pre-Revolutionary France influenced the light verse of the Restoration and Augustan periods in England. Prior (1664-1721), the first writer of society verse in English, resided for some years in

Paris and was familiar with the French language. Still, even in his case, the influence of French literature was coexistent with love for the odes of Horace, and we must regard the English familiarity with the Latin author and unbounded admiration for his verse as the root of nineteenth-century society verse, even though we admit that it would not be precisely what it is had not France furnished in the early eighteenth century the model of elegance in social and literary culture. There is an element of heartiness in the English character which prevented English writers from taking up except sporadically the French tone of cynical persiflage. Of the examples cited it will be noticed that the one from Owen Meredith is the only one that is entirely French in tone, and that is worthy of La Rochefoucauld himself. As a rule the mocking gallantry of the Frenchman becomes ~~good-humored~~ banter in his English imitator, and to this Prior is no exception. No doubt English poets missed by the change an opportunity for some biting sarcasm, but sarcasm, except in the mildest suggestion, has no proper place in society verse.

The Elizabethans were at once too enthusiastic, too romantic, and too much interested in serious questions to write with the moderation and decorum of modern society verse. Some of the madrigals of the period have the gayety and high spirits requisite to bring them within the definition, but they are songs or perhaps lyrics in the pastoral

manner. The following from Davison's *Poetical Rhapsody*, 1602, may be regarded at least as a precursor, a "prophetic form" of the species, as the paleontologists say : —

Faustina hath thè fairer face,  
And Phyllida the feater grace ;  
Both have mine eye enriched :  
This sings full sweetly with her voice ;  
Her fingers make as sweet a noise ;  
Both have mine ear bewitched.  
Ah me ! sith Fates have so provided.  
My heart, alas, must be divided.

George Wither (1588–1667) was a fluent and voluminous writer of verse. The following has some of the ease and flexibility of movement of society verse and is comparatively modern in tone : —

Shall I, wasting in despair,  
Dye because a woman's fair ?  
Or make pale my cheeks with care  
Cause another's rosie âre ?  
Be she fairer than the Day  
Or the flowry meads in May,  
If she think not well of me,  
What care I how faire she be ?

Shall my seely heart be pined  
Cause I see a woman kind ?

Or a well disposed nature  
Joyned with a lovely feature?  
Be she meeker, kinder than  
Turtle-dove or pellican;  
If she be not so to me,  
What care I how kind she be!

Shall a woman's virtues move  
Me to perish for her love,  
Or her well deservings known,  
Make me quite forget mine own?  
Be she with that goodness blest  
Which may merit name of best,  
If she be not such to me,  
What care I how good she be!

Cause her Fortune seems too high  
Shall I play the fool and die?  
She that bears a noble mind,  
If not outward helps she find,  
Thinks what with them he would do,  
That without them dares her woo.  
And unless that minde I see,  
What care I how great she be!

Great or Good or Kinde or Faire,  
I will ne'er the more despair,  
If she love me (this believe)  
I will die ere she shall grieve.  
If she slight me when I woo,  
I can scorn and let her go,  
For if she be not for me  
What care I for whom she be?

Robert Herrick was amply endowed with the power of felicitous poetic phrasing, but his subject-matter is the simple and natural relations of life. He says in the introduction to *Hesperides*: —

I sing of brooks, of blossoms, birds and bowers,  
Of April, May, of June and July flowers.  
I sing of May-poles, hock-carts, wassails, wakes,  
Of bridegrooms, brides, and of their bridal cakes.

His workmanship is exquisite, but his subject is not the subject-matter of society verse. The little odes to Blossoms and to Daffodils are very neatly turned, and he invented many charming and ingenious verse forms, and holds a very high rank in his line as a writer of bits of verse.

Edmund Waller (1605–1687), the cousin of the patriot Hampden, celebrated the charms of the Lady Dorothy Sidney, under the name of "Sacharissa." He is known as the first writer of the heroic couplet in which the grammatical pauses correspond with the end of the line — the manner afterward brought to such perfection by Pope — but as a love poet seems rather tame. His verses *On a Girdle*, and those entitled *Go, Lovely Rose*, are to be found in every anthology. The latter has all the charm possible to light amatory poetry in which dainty sentiment forbids us to believe the passion very sincere or profound: —

Go, lovely Rose,  
Tell her that wastes her time and me,



That now she knows,  
When I resemble her to thee,  
How sweet and fair she seems to be.

Tell her that's young  
And shuns to have her graces spied,  
That had'st thou sprung  
In deserts where no men abide,  
Thou must have uncommended died.

Small is the worth  
Of beauty from the light retired,  
Bid her come forth,  
Suffer herself to be desired,  
And not blush so to be admired.

Then die, that she  
The common fate of all things rare  
May read in thee,  
How small a part of time they share  
Who are so wondrous sweet and fair.

The foregoing is marked by graceful poetic fancy. The tone of the *vers de société*, however, has a certain gay carelessness and rather less of the imaginative element, a more personal and realistic attitude and a diction more like that of ordinary conversation and a very slight subacid flavor of good-humored irony. This is a modern note, and one must get rather farther from the Elizabethan age, which is too intense and high-spirited and romantic, before one finds it.

The royalist poets, Suckling and Lovelace, are animated by the good-humored gayety of the society poet, but when the latter sings:—

Stone walls do not a prison make,  
Nor iron bars a cage,  
Minds innocent and quiet take  
That for an hermitage.  
If I have freedom in my love,  
And in my soul am free  
Angels alone that soar above  
Enjoy such liberty,

he is animated by a courage and sincerity that lifts him above the ordinary mood of the poet of society verse who does not concern himself with the real prison and bars of veritable metal which confined the writer of *To Althea from Prison*. William Habington in his *Mistress Flouted* strikes the note of irony that is heard in society verse here and there, as does Suckling in *Constancy* and Abraham Cowley in *The Chronicle*, when he enumerates the names of the fair ones who have successively taken his fancy. Of the tenth in order he says:—

Gentle Henrietta then,  
And a third Mary next began,  
Then Joan, and Jane, and Audria,  
And then a pretty Thomasine,  
And then another Catherine,  
And then a long *et cetera*.

But should I now to you relate,  
The strength and riches of their state,  
The powder, patches, and the pins,  
The ribbands, jewels, and the rings,  
The lace, the paint and warlike things,  
That make up all their magazines ;

If I should tell the politic arts  
To take and keep men's hearts,  
The letters, embassies, and spies,  
The frowns and smiles and flatteries,  
The quarrels, tears, and perjuries ;  
Numberless, nameless mysteries !

And all the little lime-twigs laid  
By Matchavil, the waiting maid,  
I more voluminous should grow,  
(Chiefly if I like them should tell  
All change of weather that befell)  
Than Holinshed or Stow.

But I will briefer with them be,  
Since few of them were long with me.  
An higher and a nobler strain  
My present Empress doth claim,  
Heleonora, first o' th' name ;  
Whom God grant long to reign.

These are unimportant verses certainly, but enough to show the gradual change of the lyric spirit in the seventeenth century.

Mr. Gosse considers the *Song written at Sea* by Charles Sackville, Earl of Dorset, in 1665, the first

specimen of *vers de société* in the English language. The writer was with the fleet sent against Holland by Charles II:—

To all you ladies now at land,  
We men at sea indite,  
But first would have you understand  
How hard it is to write ;  
The muses now and Neptune, too,  
We must implore to write to you.

For though the muses should prove kind  
And fill our empty brain,  
Yet, if rough Neptune rouse the wind,  
To wave the azure main,  
Our paper, pen, and ink and we  
Roll up and down, our ships at sea.

Then, if we write not by each post,  
Think not we are unkind,  
Nor yet conclude our ships are lost  
By Dutchmen or by wind,  
Our tears we'll send a speedier way,  
The tide shall waft them twice a day.

And so he runs on in the best of good spirits, but not boisterous, a certain elegant decorum molding his gay utterance, and ends:—

But now our fears tempestuous grow,  
And cast our hopes away ;  
Whilst you regardless of our woe  
Sit careless at a play ;

Perhaps permit some happier man  
To kiss your hand or flirt your fan.

When any mournful tune you hear  
That dies in every note,  
As if it sighed with each man's care  
For being so remote  
Think, then, how often love we've made  
To you when all those tunes were played.

\* \* \* \* \*

And now we've told you all our loves  
And likewise all our fears,  
In hopes this declaration moves  
Some pity from your tears ;  
Let's hear of no inconstancy,  
We have too much of that at sea.

Mathew Prior, of the early eighteenth century, combines wit and metrical skill with an indescribable air of well-bred impudence in a way that gives him, when at his best, a very high rank among writers of light verse : —

Dear Chloe, how blubbered is that pretty face,  
Thy cheek all on fire and thy hair all uncurled ;  
Prythee quit this caprice ; and as old Falstaff says,  
“ Let us e'en talk a little like folks of this world.”

How canst thou presume thou hast leave to destroy  
The beauties which Venus but lent to thy keeping ?  
Those looks were designed to inspire love and joy ;  
More ordinary eyes may serve people for weeping.

To be vexed at a trifle or two that I writ,  
Your judgment at once and my passion you wrong ;  
You take that for fact which will scarce be found wit ;  
Od's life ! must one swear to the truth of a song !

What I speak, my fair Chloe, and what I write shows  
The difference there is betwixt nature and art ;  
I court others in verse, but I love thee in prose,  
And they have my whimsies ; but thou hast my  
heart.

The god of us verse-men, — you know, child, — the  
Sun,  
How after his journeys he sets up his rest,  
If at morning o'er earth 'tis his fancy to run,  
At night he reclines on his Thetis's breast.

So when I am weary of wandering all day,  
To thee my delight in the evening I come,  
No matter what beauties I saw in my way,  
They were but my visits, but thou art my home.

Then finish dear child, this pastoral war,  
And let us like Horace and Lydia agree,  
For thou art a girl as much brighter than her  
As he was a poet sublimer than me.

The anapests give a movement precisely fitting to the bantering tone of the speaker. The poem is thoroughly modern. Except for the delightful word "whimsies," for which we would substitute fancies, and the idiomatic forms, "than her" and

"than me," the verses might have appeared in the last issue of one of our magazines if we had a poet of the good-humored vivacity and easy grace of Mathew Prior. "Sublime" is a strange adjective to apply to Horace, but the use of it suggests the critical standpoint of the writer.

The eighteenth century produced little light verse of a high order. The essays of Addison and Steele abound in good-tempered raillery at the foibles of fashion, but they are prose. Pope's epistles are acrid whenever women are the subject. The poet who held that women are characterless could never write society verse, for its finest essence is due to a perception, at once humorous and gallant, that the feminine character is far more interesting and entertaining than the masculine. Pope's Rape of the Lock deals with some of the material of society verse, but it is a burlesque or mock-heroic, and not based on the essential but on the remote analogies of the situation, in which case the wit of a mock-heroic is apt to be shallow and artificial.

Winthrop Mackworth Praed (1802-1839) is one of the most delightful of the poets of life and manners. In "wisdom that wears the mask of fun," in wit so spontaneous as to appear instructive, in a veiled gayety with just a hint of seriousness, in polite suppression of everything that might prove tiresome or rouse unpleasantly serious reflections, he is unrivaled. The double rhyme which he habitually uses presents no obstacles to an ex-

pression as limpid and effortless as prose. An Eton boy, a Cambridge student, and a young member of Parliament, he was of course "to the manner born," and his verse reflects a sunny and cheerful temperament and evinces perfect familiarity with the society he sketches. His muse is busied with trifles, but she is far from being a gossip or a newspaper reporter; her tact is delicate and her vision keen and her good humor inexhaustible. Praed has one of the marks of the true humorist, he can be greatly amused with his own foibles. Of his boyish passion for the charming Laura Lilly, he writes: —

She sketched; the vale, the wood, the beach,  
Grew lovelier from her pencil's shading:  
She botanized; I envied each  
Young blossom in her boudoir fading:  
She warbled Handel; it was grand;  
She made the Catalina jealous:  
She touched the organ; I could stand  
For hours and hours to blow the bellows.

She smiled on many, just for fun —  
I knew that there was nothing in it;  
I was the first — the only one  
Her heart had thought of for a minute.  
I knew it, for she told me so,  
In phrase which was divinely molded:  
She wrote a charming hand, and oh!  
How sweetly all her notes were folded.



Our love was like most other loves, —  
A little glow, a little shiver,  
A rosebud, and a pair of gloves,  
And "Fly not yet," upon the river,  
Some jealousy of some one's heir,  
Some hopes of dying broken-hearted,  
A miniature, a lock of hair,  
The usual vows, — and then, we parted.

We parted ; months and years rolled by ;  
We met again four summers after ;  
Our parting was all sob and sigh ;  
Our meeting was all mirth and laughter :  
For in my heart's most secret cell  
There had been many other lodgers,  
And she was not the ball-room belle  
But only — Mrs. Something Rogers.

Mr. Locker-Lampson, one of the most finished writers of light verse of the moderns, says that Praed "has plenty of wit and a highly idiomatic, incisive, and most finished style and, in his peculiar vein, has never been equaled, and it may safely be affirmed can never be excelled." All of Praed's poems are marked with his peculiar felicity. *My Partner, The Ball-room Belle, Good-night to the Season, The Fancy Ball, School and Schoolfellows*, are among the most characteristic.

Mr. Austin Dobson, the English Horace, is more a man of letters than Praed, and much of his verse is reminiscent of the eighteenth century. He

dwells on the aspects of society one hundred and fifty years ago rather than on the "passing show." His society verse is more dainty than Praed's, with perhaps less of the air of spontaneity. In *Incognita* he handles Praed's favorite meter as skillfully as Praed himself could. *Avis*, in a difficult meter, is an admirable example of his delicate skill.

In the definition we have taken, cynicism or worldliness is as much out of place in society verse as false philosophy is in serious poetry. Owen Meredith (Lord Lytton) was a popular favorite forty years ago and was a prolific and fairly skillful rhymester. Lack of heartiness and sincerity taints his long poem, *Lucile*, and is evident in the poem below : —

#### THE PORTRAIT

Midnight past : not a sound of aught  
Thro' the silent house but the wind at his prayers.  
I sat by the dying fire and thought  
Of the dear dead woman upstairs.

Nobody with me my watch to keep,  
But the friend of my bosom, the man I love,  
And grief had sent him fast to sleep  
In the chamber up above.

Nobody else in the country place  
All round that knew of my loss beside,  
But the good young priest, with the Raphael face,  
Who confessed her when she died.

On her cold dead bosom my portrait lies,  
Which next to her heart she used to wear,  
Haunting it o'er with tender eyes  
When my own face was not there.

And I said, "The thing is precious to me,  
They will bury her soon in the churchyard clay;  
It lies on her heart and lost must be  
If I do not take it away."

I lighted my lamp at the dying flame,  
And crept up the stairs that creaked for fright,  
Till into the chamber of death I came  
Where she lay all in white.

As I stretched my hand, I held my breath,  
I turned as I drew the curtains apart:  
I dared not look on the face of the dead,  
I knew where to find her heart.

I thought, at first, as my touch fell there,  
It had warmed that heart to life with love;  
For the thing I touched was warm I swear,  
And I could feel it move.

'Twas the hand of a man that was moving slow  
O'er the heart of the dead — from the other side:  
And at once the sweat broke over my brow,  
"Who is robbing the corpse?" I cried.

Opposite me by the taper's light,  
The friend of my bosom, the man I loved,  
Stood over the corpse, and all as white,  
And neither of us moved.

"What do you here, my friend?" The man  
Looked first at me and then at the dead.  
"There is a portrait here," he began,  
"There is; it is mine," I said.

Said the friend of my bosom, "Yours no doubt  
The portrait was till a month ago,  
When this suffering angel took that out,  
And placed mine there, I know."

"This woman, she loved me well," said I.  
"A month ago," said my friend to me:  
"And in your throat," I groaned, "you lie":  
He answered, "Let us see."

We found the portrait there in its place;  
We opened it by the taper's shine:  
The gems were all unchanged; — the face  
Was neither his nor mine.

"One nail drives out another, at least;  
The face of the portrait there," I cried,  
"Is our friend's, the Raphael-faced young priest  
Who confessed her when she died."

The poet Rossetti said that "fundamental brain work" was what distinguished good poetry from inferior work. Poetry is illuminated good sense, and even when the subject-matter is the merest trifle, a sound relation to fact is necessary. Grotesqueness has no place in society verse.

Mr. Locker-Lampson says "Suckling and Herrick, Swift and Prior, Cowper, Landor, and Thomas Moore, and Praed and Thackeray may be considered the representative men in this branch of our literature." Herrick seems rather too poetic and Swift too intense to be fairly included, but Mr. Locker-Lampson's definition of society verse is broad enough to include all the verse of wit and culture. His *Lyra Elegantium* is the only collection of light, lyrical verse in our language, and in the notes he says that poems of this class "should be short, elegant, refined and fanciful, not seldom distinguished by chastened sentiment, and often playful, and should have one uniform and simple design. The tone should not be pitched high, and the language should be idiomatic, the rhythm crisp and sparkling, the rhyme frequent and never forced, while the entire poem should be marked by tasteful moderation, high finish and completeness, for however trivial the subject-matter may be, subordination to the rules of composition and perfection of execution should be strictly enforced. Each piece cannot be expected to exhibit all these characteristics, but the qualities of brevity and buoyancy are essential."

The examples in this chapter thus far have been restricted to light verse of gallantry, but Mr. Locker-Lampson's definition would cover all poems of marked elegance and destitute of intense imaginative fervor. In particular, it would cover

the poems in which the nineteenth century criticises in a half-regretful, half-humorous way the past and its fashions, especially the eighteenth century. In earlier ages men regarded the past either as barbarous or as superior in simplicity and honor, and it was not till within the last century that men began to regard their great-grandfathers as quaintly and humbrously interesting. The increased complexity of modern life, the restlessness and bustle which follow improved means of locomotion and communication ~~wear on us~~. We see that our predecessors lived at a more ~~leisurely rate~~ and were not forced to listen to so ~~many discordant~~ street cries. Again, the modern theory of development has made us conscious that our civilization is but a stage, and perhaps not as comfortable and reasonable a stage as theirs. At least, they lived as long and fruitfully as we, and much more quietly. The modern tendency to precision has made their manners clear to us, as the past has never been in any age before. Chaucer and his contemporaries made the Grecian and Trojan worthies talk like knights of the court of Edward III; Shakespeare and his contemporaries conceive the characters of history as Elizabethan men and women, and place them in an Elizabethan civilization, firing cannon and discussing skeptical philosophy in the dark ages of Denmark and heading an army with "drums and colors" in pre-historic Britain. But Thackeray reproduces the

manners of the Augustan age with scrupulous and affectionate exactness. Austin Dobson is one of many who have embalmed in verse the manners of the past; "the assembly," "the rout," the literary coterie, the "form and pressure" of "Anna's or of George's day." Poems on such topics may well be called the verse of culture, or even society verse, though they have to do with a vanished society. Austin Dobson's *To a Missal of the Thirteenth Century* embodies regret for an aspect of the past interesting to the literary man. *The Old Sedan Chair* and *Molly Trefusis* are society verse from the standpoint of the lover of the eighteenth century. FitzGerald's *Chivalry at a Discount*, Praed's *The Vicar*, Locker-Lampson's *The Old Oak Tree* come within his category. Dobson's *To a Missal* ends:—

Not as ours the books of old —  
Things that steam can stamp and fold;  
Not as ours the books of yore —  
Rows of type and nothing more.

Then a book was still a Book,  
Where a wistful man might look,  
Finding something through the whole  
Beating — like a human soul.

In that growth of day by day,  
When to labor was to pray,  
Surely something vital passed  
To the patient page at last.

Something that one still perceives  
Vaguely present in the leaves ;  
Something from the worker lent,  
Something mute — but eloquent.

In our country poets have contributed not a little to the graceful and spirited verse of culture. The wit of Dr. Holmes frequently played about social themes with good-humored sprightliness. *The Last Leaf* and *Dorothy Q* are all that society verse should be, and the *Autocrat at the Breakfast Table* is society verse in prose, if such a contradiction is admissible. Mr. William Allen Butler's *Nothing to Wear* is such kindly satire that, in spite of the moral earnestness of the close, it falls within the general definition. The author, too, seems thoroughly at home in the world he describes. Mr. Aldrich's poetry is always marked with distinction, polish, and urbanity. His *Thalia* is absolutely perfect, the acme of the poetry of culture. There is no poem in the language in which the contrast between worldliness and unsophisticated nature is more felicitously presented than in Mr. Stedman's *Pan in Wall Street*. Praed himself could not have touched the chord with more unerring perception, nor have put his rhymes together with more delicate skill, albeit the meter is one which the English poet has made peculiarly his own. This and Dr. Holmes's *Last Leaf* touch high-water mark. Our tendency to grotesque, ex-



aggerated humor carries many of our lighter rhymes outside of the definition of society verse. Good-humored toleration of folly and readiness to catch the human features behind the mask of affectation and conventionalism is not a distinctive trait of men descended from Puritan ancestors. Consequently, the note of ridicule or of satire is sometimes heard instead of the kindly cynicism of one familiar with all the phases of society. Again, our past is not so picturesque as is that of England, and our social life lacks many of the class traditions that give perspective and color to an old civilization. Our "passing show" lacks long-established associations, and it must be confessed is not so interesting and thought-provoking, nor amusing as is that of the mother country. A people which has originated the phrase the "strenuous life" and pronounces the word "hustle" with religious fervor, does not breathe the atmosphere of cultivated leisure in which delicate literary flowers bloom.

Nevertheless, an American anthology of fugitive verse might be compiled in which wit, sincerity, playfulness, and pathos should be commingled in just proportions. The compiler would draw on the work of Clinton Scollard and Walter Learned and George A. Baker and many others of less note, and could easily show that we are not unapt disciples of Prior and Praed and Austin Dobson.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE FRENCH FORMS

THE rondel, the rondeau, the triolet, the villanelle, the ballade, and the chant royal are metrical schemes which were invented in France proper, that is in the northern part of what is now France, some of them as early as the thirteenth century. With them may be included the sestina invented in Provence in the first quarter of the thirteenth century. All of these are forms as strictly as is the Italian sonnet, indeed even more so, since the rhyme scheme is inflexible, although some latitude is allowed in the length of the lines. All except the last have been adopted by poets in the English language since the seventeenth century, although the number of rhyming words required is a serious obstacle to their general use. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Swinburne and Dobson in England, and Bunner and several other writers of light verse in our country, wrote a number of ballades, rondels, and rondeaux which have much of the grace and vivacity of the best French specimens. The allowance of identical terminals as rhymes in French poetry, as for instance all

words ending in *té*, like *beauté*, *bonté*, *naïveté*, etc., reduces materially the difficulty of finding the six or eight rhymes which several of the French forms require. All of these forms, especially the *rondel*, are well fitted to be the mold for light, gay sentiment. All of them are essentially French in character, artificial but not cumbrous, formal, but not stiff, graceful but not with the free unstudied grace of nature. All have the note of literary distinction, and are usually the vehicle of sentiment appropriate to *vers de société* or to the verse of culture.

The first mentioned, the rondel, contains like the sonnet, fourteen lines. Only two rhyming sounds are allowed, but as the first and second lines are used as a refrain, and repeated in the eighth and ninth and in the thirteenth and fourteenth, it is necessary to find two sets of five rhyming words only. Even this restricts the English writer to certain well-known groups. The refrain, which should be welded into the structure of the sentence, or at least not break the continuity of the thought, is a feature of all but one of the French forms, and frequently gives a very pleasing effect. The normal recurrence of the rhymes in the *rondel* is *a-b-b-a-a-b-a-b-a-b-b-a-a-b*, the first, the fourth, and the seventh *a* representing the same word, and the first, the fourth, and the seventh *b*, also standing for the same word, to which the others, represented by *b*, rhyme. Mr.

Dobson, who has succeeded better than any other modern in rendering these delicate forms in our language, deviates slightly from the French tradition in the arrangement of the rhymes, while retaining the refrain in the middle and end. His rhyme scheme is *a-b-a-b-b-a-a-b-a-b-a-b a-b*, involving two couplets less and more alternate rhymes. One of his rondels will serve for an example :—

Too hard it is to sing  
 In these untuneful times,  
 When only coin can ring,  
 And no one cares for rhymes.  
 Alas for him who climbs  
 To Aganippe's Spring :  
 Too hard it is to sing  
 In these untuneful times.

His kindred clip his wing,  
 His feet the critic limes ;  
 If fame her laurel bring,  
 Old age his forehead rimes :  
 Too hard it is to sing  
 In these untuneful times.—

In some cases the first line only is repeated in the refrain in the middle or even in both places, thus bringing the rondel down to thirteen or even to twelve lines. Mr. Swinburne's "roundel" is nearer to a rondeau than to a rondel. It consists of eleven lines rhyming *a-b-a-b-b-a-b-a-b-a-b*, lines

four and eleven being the first phrase or even the first word of the first line repeated. The refrain is sometimes omitted entirely. Mr. Swinburne wrote a century of poems in this form, and they show his astonishing facility in rhyming, but lack of power in deft and dexterous phrasing. The following is one of the most pleasing :—

“Far-fetched and dear-bought,” as the proverb rehearses,

Is good, or was held so, for ladies ; but nought  
In a song can be good if the turn of the verse is

Far-fetched and dear-bought.

As the turn of a wave should it sound, and the thought

Ring smooth ; and as light as the spray that disperses  
Be the gleam of the words for the garb thereof wrought.

Let the soul in it shine through the sound as it pierces

Men's hearts with possession of music unsought,  
For the bounties of song are no jealous god's mercies,  
Far-fetched and dear-bought.

The rondolet is a pretty diminutive of the rondel. It consists of seven lines only, two of which are the first repeated.

Say what you please,  
But know, I shall not change my mind !—

Say what you please,  
Even, if you wish it, on your knees—  
And when you hear me next defined  
As something lighter than the wind,  
Say what you please.

The *rondeau*, the form which has met the most favor in English, is much like the *rondel*, and it consists of thirteen iambic lines of eight or ten syllables with only two rhymes. It contains three stanzas, the first and third of five lines, the second of three, and a refrain consisting of the first word or words of the first line added without rhyming to anything at the end of the eighth and the thirteenth lines. It is the classic vehicle for French wit and epigram and compliment, though a later form than the *rondel*, and has a certain aristocratic grace and distinction. It was very much cultivated in Louis the fourteenth's reign, when there was no lack of taste and stylistic precision, if truth and heroism were in little repute. In the regular form the rhymes run *a-a-b-b-a-a-a-b-a-a-b-b-a*.

It is of course very difficult to find in English eight good rhymes, and perhaps in an extremity a writer might be allowed to use the same word twice. Mr. Dobson has caught the French spirit in his *rondeau* on *The Hurry of This Time* :—

With slower pen men used to write  
Of old when letters were "polite";  
In Anna's or in George's days  
They could afford to turn a phrase  
Or trim a straggling theme aright.

They knew not steam; electric light  
Not yet had dazed their calmer sight;

They meted out both blame and praise  
With slower pen.

Too swiftly now the hours take flight,  
What's read at morn is dead at night ;  
Scant space have we for Art's delays  
Whose breathless thought so briefly stays ;  
We may not work — ah, would we might !  
With slower pen.

Mr. Dobson's ten-line rondeau requires but five rhymes to each terminal, which brings it within the reach of ordinary perseverance and ingenuity. In Mr. Dobson's hands it loses little of its dainty precision by being shortened, as is evident from the following one addressed to the American artist, Boughton : —

Spring stirs and wakes by holt and hill ;  
In barren copse and bloomless close  
Revives the memory of the rose,  
And breaks the yellow daffodil ;  
Look how the spears of crocus fill  
The ancient hollows of the snows —  
Spring stirs and wakes ! —

Yet what to you are months ! At will  
For you the season comes or goes :  
We watch the flower that fades and blows  
But on your happy canvas still,  
Spring stirs and wakes.

The French poet Voiture, of the age of Louis XIV, some thirty of whose rondeaux have been

preserved, was master of this form. Mr. Dobson approximates as nearly as is possible in English to his dainty, graceful precision, but there is a quality of gayety in some of the French ones that cannot quite be caught in a foreign language.

The triolet is a characteristically French measure, and is one of the oldest, though all of them have been in use for five or six centuries. The triolet consists of eight lines, usually short ones, of an anapestic movement. In reality there are but five lines in this tripping stanza, since the first is repeated as the fourth and the first and second as the seventh and eighth. The rhymes run *a-b-a-a-a-b-a-b*, and the rhyme on *b* is preferably double or triple. This quaint little verse has much of the vivacity and apparent artlessness of a bird's song. The following examples illustrate the structure and the quality. The first is from Mr. Dobson's lines entitled *Rose Leaves*:—

I intended an ode.  
 And it turned into triolet;  
 It began à-la-mode,—  
     I intended an ode,  
 But Rose crossed the road  
 With a bunch of fresh violets —  
     I intended an ode,  
 But it turned into triolets.

One of the prettiest sets is Mr. Dobson's *Notes of a Honeymoon* in his volume *At the Sign of the*



*Lyre.* The bride discovers the marriage notice  
“at a bookstall.”

“ Here it is in the Times ;  
Dear Charlie, how funny !  
’Twixt a ‘ Smith ’ and a ‘ Symes.’  
Here it is in the Times :  
And it’s *not* with the crimes !  
You must pay, *I’ve* no money.  
Here it is in the Times,  
Dear Charlie, how funny ! ”

*Misgivings, No. 1*

“ Poor papa, he’s alone ! ”  
She is sure he must miss her,  
There’s a tear in the tone —  
“ *Poor* papa! *he’s* alone ; ”  
At this point I own  
There is naught but to kiss her.  
“ Poor papa — *he’s* alone ; ”  
She is sure he must miss her.

*Misgivings, No. 2*

By-play as before —  
“ Then you’ll love me forever ? ”  
“ Forever and more ! ”  
(By-play as before)  
“ Never think me a bore ?  
Never laugh at me ? ” “ Never ! ”  
(By-play as before)  
“ Then you’ll love me forever ? ”

The other French forms are adapted to more serious thought than the triolet, though all have the charm of vivacity regulated by prescribed manner. The ballade which has nothing in common with the English ballad since it is not folk song but the flower of aristocratic and cultured literary art, consists of three stanzas of eight lines each and a concluding stanza of four lines called the *envoi* or dedication. The lines are usually of eight or ten syllables and of the iambic movement, though many of the English reproductions are anapestic or dactylic and sometimes in six-syllable verse, According to strict law there should be but three rhymes arranged: *a-b-a-b-b-c-b-c* and running through the four stanzas. The difficulty of finding so many rhymes on one terminal has led to the use of four rhymes instead of three only, a new terminal being introduced on the fifth and seventh lines. The eighth line is the same in the three long stanzas and in the close of the *envoi*, constituting a refrain which adds greatly to the musical effect. Mr. Dobson's *Ballade of Heroes* illustrates the structure : —

Because you passed and now are not,  
 Because in some remoter day,  
 Your sacred dust from doubtful spot  
 Was blown by ancient airs away,  
 Because you perished — must men say  
 Your deeds were naught, and so profane  
 Your lives with that cold burden — Nay,  
 The deeds you wrought were not in vain.

Though it may be above the plot  
That hid your once imperial clay,  
No greener than o'er men forgot,  
The unregarding grasses sway,  
Though there no sweeter is the lay  
Of careless bird — though you remain  
Without distinction of decay;  
The deeds you wrought are not in vain.

No, for while yet, in town or cot,  
Your story stirs the pulse's play,  
And men forget the sordid lot,  
The sordid care of cities gray,  
While yet beset in homelier fray,  
They learn from you the lesson plain,  
That life may go so honor stay,  
The deeds you wrought are not in vain.

Heroes of old — I humbly lay  
The laurel on your graves again :  
Whatever men have done men may, —  
The deeds you wrought are not in vain.

The name of the graceless scamp, François Villon, who was condemned to be hanged in 1461, is identified with the ballade as much as that of Petrarch is with the sonnet. Rossetti's translation of Villon's *Ballade of Dead Women* is justly celebrated, and the one to his comrades who were hanged is a singular and powerful compound of melancholy and diablerie.

The villanelle is a quaint and pleasing form

marked by repetitions, or alternate refrains. It is made up of three-line stanzas, the middle lines of all the stanzas rhyming as well as the first and third, the scheme being *a-b-a — a-b-a*. But the first line of the first stanza is repeated as the last of all the even numbered stanzas, and the last line of the first stanza is repeated as the last line of the odd numbered stanzas. An examination of the following specimen by Mr. Gosse will make the metrical construction clear. It will be observed that in the last stanza both of the repetends are included, making a four-line stanza, and that the repeated lines are brought logically into the context though slight verbal changes are permitted if the terminal word is always retained. Normally, the lines are repeated without change.

Would'st thou not be content to die,  
When low-hung fruit is hardly clinging,  
And golden Autumn passes by?

If we could vanish, you and I,  
While the last woodland bird is singing,  
Would'st thou not be content to die?

Deep drifts of leaves in the forest lie,  
Red vintage that the frost is flinging,  
And golden Autumn passes by —

Beneath this delicate rose-gray sky,  
While sunset bells are faintly ringing,  
Would'st thou not be content to die?

For wintry webs of mist on high  
Out of the muffled earth are springing,  
And golden Autumn passes by —

O now, when pleasures fade and fly,  
And Hope her southward flight is winging  
Would'st thou not be content to die?

Lest winter come with wailing cry,  
His cruel icy bondage bringing  
When golden Autumn hath passed by;

And thou with many a tear and sigh,  
While life her wasted hands is wringing,  
Shall pray in vain for leave to die  
When golden Autumn hath passed by.

The chant royal is an extended ballade made up of five instead of three stanzas, each of eleven lines, with an envoi of five lines. The last line of the first stanza is repeated as the last of the four others and also of the envoi. As five rhymes only are allowed, one of them must be repeated three times and the others twice in each stanza, to say nothing of the envoi. As this implies fifteen rhymes on one terminal and ten on each of the two others, the chant royal is virtually impossible in English under our restrictions, which exclude identical terminals. Mr. Dobson has succeeded in producing one, but it must be regarded as a *tour de force*, a technical rather than an artistic triumph. There are some fine poems in French on this pat-

tern by Clement Marot, a poet who lived in the reign of Francis I, contemporary with Henry VIII of England, but even these have the character of "curiosities of literature." Part of the pleasure we experience in reading poetry is due to our perception that a difficulty has been overcome and audible symmetry been produced out of unsymmetrical and refractory vocal material, but when the symmetry is entirely mechanical and evidently the result of ingenuity alone, the curse which rests on machine-made art withers the beauty of the work. The structure must not be so difficult that art cannot make it seem easy and natural.

The following, by Mr. H. B. Vanderbogart, is a chant royal on the pattern of Clement Marot, the rhymes being the same in all the stanzas and the scheme, *a-b-a-b-c-c-d-d-e-d-e*.

#### THE BEACON-LIGHTS

The romance and the mystery of old  
Are fading slowly in the fading light  
Of tender memories, which ever hold  
Historic beauty from the falling night,  
Whose murky shadows close upon us bend —  
Oblivion whose days shall never end.  
Yet over all, beyond the distant sky,  
Like steadfast stars that shine eternally,  
Above the world, above its mournful biers  
We mark afar, with hope-enkindled eye,  
The watchlights burning through the endless years.

O lovers, whom the wings of love enfold,  
For whom have come the glories that requite  
All toils and pains, and cast in earthly mold  
The fair ideals of the true and bright,  
Whose spirits to the golden realm ascend,  
Where love his faithful servants doth commend,  
The hours of youth and joy before you lie,  
When heart responds to heart in low reply ;  
When lovers glimpse the light beyond the spheres,  
And through the mist of mortal life espy  
The watchlights burning through the endless years.

And you whom grief in slavery hath sold  
To bitter pains that in your vitals bite,  
O'er whom the clouds of sorrow dark have rolled,  
And whom the world hath trodden down, despite  
Your weary struggles, you who have no friend  
To shield you from the storm, from foes defend,  
Who know the depths of sorrow's mystery,  
Be brave in doleful lot, but ask not why  
Your hearts are fuel for the fire that sears  
You now. In faith rekindle with your sigh  
The watchlights burning through the endless years.

And you for whom the requiem is tolled,  
For whom a people said the burial rite,  
Fair freedom's soldiers, steadfast, true, and bold  
Behind the pennon of the red-cross Knight,  
Who never feared for men your blood to spend,  
And trod the thorny paths which upward trend  
Above the world, above this filthy sty,  
O brothers gone before, our tears are dry,

Your deathless names humanity reveres,  
 And in your lives we hail with joyful cry  
 The watchlights burning through the endless years.

Alas, alas, my hand is faint and cold ;  
 Nor is there strength sufficient in my might  
 To grave in characters of fluent gold  
 The fame of those who fought the noble fight ;  
 If Milton's, Shelley's, Hugo's soul would lend  
 Some force, my verse a loftier way might wend.  
 It matters not how long in vain I try  
 Song's tangled skein of beauty to untie,  
 If he perchance who on these pages peers  
 May see as faint reflections flickering high  
 The watchlights burning through the endless years.

*Envoi*

Prince, take my humble song, and so — good-by ;  
 Song's bird of paradise from me doth fly.  
 But yet the heart of man discerns through tears  
 Flaming in splendor that can never die  
 The watchlights burning through the endless years.

There are many other subordinate French forms of respectable antiquity ; as *la Kyrielle*, *la Batelée*, and *la Brisée*, which are short stanzas with internal rhymes. *Le Lai* is a series of short couplets, all rhyming, separated by still shorter lines also rhyming, for example : —

La grandeur humaine  
 Est une ombre vaine  
 Qui fuit :



Une âme mondaine,  
A perte d'haleine,  
La suit.

The virelai is much the same. A modified form of this meter is used by Calverley in two of the poems in *Fly Leaves*, with happy effect.

The south of France, including the provinces of Languedoc, Provence, Gascony, Guienne, Dauphiny, Lyonnais, and Limousin, was once largely independent of the literary culture of France proper. Its affiliations in language, race, and poetic expression were quite as much with northern Spain and northern Italy as with Paris. In the thirteenth century lyric poetry was developed in the Provençal language in many ingenious forms. The sestina was a curious metrical freak not without beauty in spite of its mathematical rigidity. The other Provençal forms, the canzone or ode, the serena or evening song, the aube (or alb), the morning song, the tenso or dialogue, and the serviente have much more flexibility, and are usually classic derivatives. Our word "serenade" is derived from the Provençal serena, and Shakespeare used the traditional material of the aube, or morning hymn, with beautiful effect in the parting of Romeo and Juliet: —

*Juliet.* Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet near day:  
It was the nightingale, and not the lark  
That pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear;

Nightly she sings on yon pomegranate tree.  
Believe me love, it was the nightingale.

*Romeo.* It was the lark, the herald of the morn,  
No nightingale: look love, what envious streaks  
Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east.  
Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day  
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops.  
I must be gone and live, or stay and die.

The period of the development of Provençal lyric poetry corresponds nearly to the period of the crusades — from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries — and it was in this sub-nationality that the crusading ardor was endowed with the most romantic devotion, and the institution of chivalry was carried to its most fantastic refinement. Every knight cultivated the *gai science*, and was a troubadour, as well as a soldier and courtier. But bishops, priests, ladies, lawyers, and doctors also wrote and sang verses, usually amatory or gently satiric. There is something unreal and operatic in this devotion to song by an entire community, and the trouvères, or poets, of northern France put more of the genuine stuff of romantic and narrative poetry in their work than did their southern brethren. Still, the spirit of the south of France has indirectly contributed to the poetic development of Europe through France itself, and in a less degree through England in the century after the Norman conquest, when the political connec-

tion between England and southwestern France was close. Richard I of England, it will be remembered, was the son of Eleanor, Duchess of Aquitaine, and himself a troubadour of repute.

The sestina, the only Provençal form we shall consider, has been but little cultivated in the English language on account of the difficulties it presents, and on account of its extreme artificiality, which gives it the character of a mathematical puzzle rather than a poetical structure. It is, however, interesting, not only as the very acme of metrical ingenuity, but as a musical composition, mechanical in the extreme, but harmonious in the regular variations in the position of its rhymes, while the rhyming words themselves remain unchanged in the six stanzas.

It is a poem of six stanzas of six lines each concluded with a tornada or short stanza of three lines. Whether written in rhyme or blank verse, the six terminal words of the lines are the same in all the stanzas, but their order is curiously permuted. In the standard sestina the rhymes run *a-b-a-a-b-b* in the odd-numbered stanzas, and *b-a-b-b-a-a* in the even-numbered stanzas, and whenever a couplet is repeated the order of the rhyming words must be inverted. Further, the final word of each stanza is repeated as the final word of the first line of the next stanza, and the second line of each stanza closes with the same word as the first line of the preceding stanza. In

the tornada, which caps this curious and complicated metrical edifice, each line of the three must begin with a certain one of the original terminals, and end with another one, or else the first mentioned prescribed words must fall in their order in the middle of the lines, the position of the three terminal words being the same as before. In order to fulfill all these conditions a "magic square" was devised. Representing the terminal words of the first stanza by the digits up to six, the arrangement runs:—

First Stanza . . .	1-2-3-4-5-6
Second Stanza . . .	6-1-5-2-4-3
Third Stanza . . .	3-6-4-1-2-5
Fourth Stanza . . .	5-3-2-6-1-4
Fifth Stanza . . .	4-5-1-3-6-2
Sixth Stanza . . .	2-4-6-5-3-1

In the tornada the words represented by 1, 3, and 5, must occur at the beginning or middle of the lines, and the words represented by 2, 4, and 6 at the ends. The words represented by 1, 3, and 4 rhyme together, and so do the words represented by 2, 5, and 6.

An examination of the above arrangement will disclose many singular mathematical properties. Some of the simplest are: that the vertical columns if added give the same sum as the horizontal rows; that any horizontal line can be deduced from the row above it by taking the figures in the

upper row in the order indicated by the figures in row No. 2 ; that the first rhyming couplet in any stanza is repeated in an inverse order as the last couplet in the next stanza ; that the non-rhyming words at the ends of any first two lines are repeated in order at the ends of the fourth and fifth lines in every second stanza below. There are many more complicated sequences, all of which flow from the law of formation, which do not apply to the position of the rhymes, and therefore do not directly affect the poem. The first figures in column 1 are the same as the second figures in column 2, and the same peculiarity appears in columns 4 and 5 and in columns 3 and 6. Beginning with figure 1 and reading downward to the bottom, and then going to the top we find the invariable order, 1-6-3-5-4-2. The result is to give variety under uniform law.

The following sestina follows the Provençal standard with strictness : —

NEW HOPE

(*A Sestina*)

December comes with bitter blast,  
The cruel, ruthless winter wind,  
And all sweet summer's bloom is past :  
But summer's hope will ever last,  
Although the icy shroud may bind  
The earth whose heart it cannot find.

After the snows the sun will find  
And quicken seeds cold cannot blast ;  
The life that earth's deep heart doth bind  
Is stronger than the northern wind,  
Through changing years unchanged at last,  
Till springs and winters all are past.

What though the autumn days are past ;  
The future hours will surely find  
The next year better than the last ;  
The summer's breath succeeds the blast  
Of icy winter's Arctic wind,  
Nor suffers long the frost to bind

Earth's pulsing life. Frost cannot bind,  
With feeble fetters of the past,  
The springtime's reinspiring wind.  
The bud, the flower, the fruit will find,  
When hushed is loud December's blast,  
The fiercest winter will not last,

But, buried by the hours at last,  
Yield to its heir. The wreaths which bind  
Spring's robes are stirred by no rude blast ;  
The zephyr's breath, which overpast  
Leaves no leaf torn, will never find  
The cold caress of winter's wind.

So in the bracing winter's wind,  
Harsh while its icy rigors last,  
By faith the summer's air we find ;  
And though December's frost may bind

December's world, it soon is past,  
And we forget the winter's blast.

Blow then, O blast of polar wind !  
In days soon past, chill while they last  
And black frosts bind, new hope we find.

Many sestinas are not written under the standard formula. Mr. Swinburne has written one in which the rhymes run *a-b-a-b-a-b*. He observes the rule to make the terminals of the second lines the same as the terminals of the first lines of the preceding stanzas, and the terminals of the first lines the same as the terminals of the last lines of the preceding stanzas, and to use all the terminals successively in these positions. Having no further definite formula, his rhyme-scheme is chaotic, the only regulating principle being the avoidance of couplets so that in every stanza we find *a-b-a-b-a-b*. But the *a*'s are repeated in the same order twice and so are the *b*'s. This is a matter of little artistic moment, but the essence of the sestina is uniformity of terminals with variety of position. Mr. Swinburne wrote also a double sestina, the *Complaint of Liza*, in which there are twelve stanzas of twelve lines each, the twelve terminals being the same in all the stanzas. There are six rhyming pairs in the twelve end words, but they are distributed at random at intervals of from three to nine lines, so that in many cases the echo

is lost. The end word of each stanza is as before the end word of the first line of the next, the second line having the same terminal as the first of the preceding stanza. He is limited to the observance of this rule, and the avoidance of adjacent rhymes so that his task is comparatively easy, for having written his first two lines in the prescribed order he has his choice of nine words to end his next line, of eight to end the next, and so on, so that no real difficulty is encountered till he reaches the eleventh line, when he has but one word to use to close his line. But he has not obeyed the first law implicitly, for in the tenth stanza he uses the word "me" as a closing word which has already been used in the first stanza. He should have used the word "dead."

The only way to construct a sestina is, first, to write down the terminal words chosen, in the order prescribed by the formula for all the stanzas, and then fill in. This is, of course, a mechanical way of writing verse, but, after all, the sestina is more ingenious than poetic. The rhyming words must be chosen with some reference to the sentiment intended to be developed, and it is best to bring in some words which can be used as verbs and substantives both, like "crown," or "blast." Or the first stanza may be written, and then the terminals for the five others written in the order prescribed by the formula. It will be in either case an exercise in verbal acrobatics, but not nearly so difficult as



it seems, and the result, if mechanical, will have, at least, the merit of structural unity. Mr. Kipling's unrhymed poem, the *Sestina of the Tramp Royal*, is full of vigor, and shows that the exigencies of the form do not prevent the artistic presentation of a conception.

The fanciful forms of French verse, with their charming repetitions and artificial echoes, are not adapted to serious poetic expression. The greatest of our poetry is in simple forms, much of it, indeed, in blank verse, where form is reduced to the simplest elements. But civilized man is subject to many moods, and the ingenious, artificial structures of old French poetry are not altogether foreign to most of us, and to people of the right temperament are extremely delightful. Formality has its own charm when it is the mask of wit and sense and good humor. Even the sestina, technical and mechanical as it is, has an attraction that is not entirely due to its antiquity. Its oddity largely disappears after examination, and the subtle changes in position prevent the repetition of the rhyming words from becoming monotonous. A normal sestina composed in English by a poet would, doubtless, be poetry.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE EPIC AND THE ROMANCE

THE branches of the great Aryan stock have passed through many successive stages in their long progress from the condition of tribes or hordes, united by the tie of descent from a common ancestor, to that of modern nations with their complex social systems, frameworks of tradition, social habit, written law, personal and property rights, and class groupings. One of these stages, when the patriarchal tradition is not exhausted, and simplicity of manners coexists with considerable development of authority on the part of the chieftain, and of individual freedom in the body of the people, is known as the "heroic age." It is a time of turbulence and family feuds. The constitution of society is aristocratic, but the aristocracy does not look down on the other orders of society as serfs or villains radically inferior in nature. The members of the aristocracy are personal leaders in war or adventure, or judges of the people, and do not disdain to engage in the ordinary occupations of herding or agriculture. This age is represented by the Achæans of whom Homer sings, by the

Franks and Saxons in the time of Charlemagne, by the Germanic tribes who invaded Britain, and by the Scandinavians who settled Iceland in the ninth century.

The poetry in which a people passing through this stage expresses itself is said to have the epic tone. Of course the literary quality of epic songs is determined by the artistic capabilities of each race and by their surroundings; *Beowulf* or the *Nibelungenlied* are vastly inferior to the *Iliad*, but the general character of the society represented in all are similar. There is the same simplicity of vision, the same realism, the same glorification of personal conflict, the supernatural intrudes into the natural in the same primitive and unspiritual manner. Mr. Ker, whose *Epic and Romance* discusses the subject at length, says that there is nothing in the whole range of English literature so like a scene from the *Iliad* as the *Battle of Maldon* in Anglo-Saxon. ¶ In epic poetry personality or character is finely conceived, the narrator loves and appreciates the hero as a man. In the later romantic poems, however, the characters are vaguely portrayed; the knights are abstract embodiments of the chivalric ideal. ¶ Odysseus and Birhtnoth, on the contrary, are distinct figures, and even Achilles, the idealized heroic type of the Hellenic race, is himself, — energetic, passionate, and primitive. It is an epic feature of the *Morte D'Arthur*, a fifteenth-century recast of mediæval romances,

that Gawain, Lancelot, and Arthur are marked personalities, whereas the subordinate characters like Balin, and King Mark, and Merlin have the true romantic indefiniteness.

It is possible to conceive that the great epic narratives grew out of historic narrative ballads, which were added to, welded together, and widened in scope by successive generations of bards, and finally recast by some one individual of elevated poetic genius. There is no historic proof of such a process. Mr. Ker says that the epical material of Iceland was left in a chaotic state, and that an age of more artificiality and literary self-consciousness followed the heroic age before any unification of the fragmentary songs or selection of any one hero as representative was made. Whether this would have taken place under any circumstances we cannot tell; we only know that in Greece two long narrative poems embodying life in the heroic age were preserved, and that in the Germanic and Scandinavian countries a body of poetry was produced having the same literary characteristics, but of far lower literary quality, because it never crystallized into one supreme epic. It seems almost impossible that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* could have received their unity from any source but the genius of an individual named Homer, though doubtless that exceptional genius worked on a large amount of material gathered by generations of predecessors, and inherited the use

of a highly developed musical language in a community accustomed to poetical expression. Even if Homer's material was old poetry, as Shakespeare's material was old plays and stories, the making of an *Iliad* or a *King John* out of the old material was the work of an individual. We may even admit that several earlier epical narratives have been used to form the *Iliad* without lessening its claims to be Homer's work and not an "agglutination of ballads."

The subject-matter of epical poetry is something of national interest, and the leading characters tend to become representative of broad national traits, and this, even before a political nationality in the modern sense is developed. The Greek tribes unite to rescue a woman stolen from the household of one of the great families. A long desultory war follows, till the family of the ravisher in Asia is exterminated. One of the chieftains, prince of a petty island in the Mediterranean, encounters many delays and difficulties on his return. Songs about Achilles and Odysseus become favorites, and are repeated and expanded till, in the hands of an exceptional poet, they become the expression of the Hellenic sense of race; and the men and their associates are typical, not merely of the warrior and adventurer, but of the Greek spirit of war and adventure. The struggle between the Moors of Spain and the Germanic tribes of Europe has the same ethnical interest and epical breadth, and is a proper

matter for epical treatment in the song of Roland. Malory's *Morte Darthur*, though essentially a romance, is epical, in as far as its underlying subject-matter is the defeat of the Celtic race and the tragic end of the last of the Celtic chieftains. Shakespeare's historical plays have an epical element, in as far as they turn on events of national importance. *Macbeth* has an epical quality, in that the character motives are simple and primitive — not “sicklied o’er by the pale cast of thought,” and the action violent, decided, and rapid, and affecting the Scotch nation. But the true race epic, ~~or heroic~~ song, is the outcome of the heroic age, or that immediately succeeding, though some of its qualities of energy and simple motives may appear in literature of later periods.

In saying that the subject of an epic is something of historic interest, it is not meant that the historic importance of the events or historic accuracy is regarded. The epic is built on historical tradition, and tradition is to fact as a vine which grows over a stone monument, at once hiding and ornamenting the outlines and covering the inscriptions, or even causing them to molder beyond recognition. The singer of the old epics felt the pride of race, and he rehearsed portions of what he had heard of the great men of the past, and colored the old stories imaginatively. Why a certain name or a certain action should appeal to posterity is difficult to say ; but certain men are singled

out as race heroes, and certain stories are singled out to be handed down, though others which are neglected might illustrate the fortunes of the race better. The imagination seems to work quite arbitrarily in this selection, but doubtless it follows certain attractions. Why should Arthur be chosen from many British chieftains to be the central figure in so many stories, and be the one to be made a king of romance? The epic poem is not a "rhymed chronicle," and its story may magnify a comparatively unimportant historical episode. But it is an episode which appeals powerfully to the imagination of the people, and represents in their consciousness the bond which unites them.

But the word "epic," is not ~~restricted to the dignified~~ narrative of the heroic age. The term is habitually applied to Virgil's *Æneid*, Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. These are clearly not growths nor direct outcomes of the heroic age. They are produced by the poets of a later age and are each the work of an individual. The subjects are of national, or of broad human interest; the founding of Rome, the Crusade when Christianity and Mohammedanism strove for the possession of the sacred city, or the contest of the embodiments of the spiritual forces of good and evil for dominion over the race of man. These are rightly called epics on account of the far-reaching importance of the events narrated, and the dignity of the style. We are, therefore, forced, as Mr.

Theodore Watts says in the article on poetry in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, to recognize two classes of epical poems — “epics of growth” and “epics of art”; the one being the race epic, originally the oral song of the heroic age, and the other, the written epic, the work of a scholar-poet in an age of reflection and culture. But the race epic is the more typical since it is the outcome of a condition of society. The epic of culture is an attempt to imitate the true epic. Homer sets the pattern for Virgil. There are, then, two distinct uses of the word “epic.”

The romance, or romantic narrative poem, differs from the epic in tone and atmosphere. The Christian religion, the feudal system, and the institution of chivalry were all powerful elements in the formation of character and manners. The Teutonic and the Latin races fused, and in fusing reacted on one another, in France. A community marked by sharp class distinctions between lord and serf with graded distinctions from top to bottom, in which certain occupations are reserved for the aristocracy and the labor of the common people is despised, lives in an atmosphere very different from that of the earlier heroic age. The intellectual activity and curiosity of the aristocracy is greater than before and finds expression in many fantastic and ingenious forms. The conventional code of morals and conduct is vastly more complex and artificial. Literary expression seeks new



forms. The old-fashioned, direct, realistic narrative is overlaid with conceits and ornaments. The personages, instead of being definite men and women from whose characters the action directly flows, become allegorical characters or names divested of any definite relation to humanity. They move in a world of superstition and oddities. A knight puts on his armor, saddles his horse and rides in any direction it happens. In the afternoon he comes on an unknown country where there is "a fair castle in a wood" which he has never heard of before though it lies within eighteen or twenty miles of his home. Here he meets a knight "well mounted, clad in black armor" who challenges him to fight. They fight three or four hours according to the rules, and the stranger yields. In yielding he passes the title to his real estate, and the newcomer takes possession of the house without any resistance on the part of the garrison. The castle turns out to contain some hundred odd young women, to whom the conqueror prudently gives their freedom. The detail of this matter is spun out for some three, six, ten, or it may be thirty thousand lines. The whole story is unreal, impossible, and unrepresentative of anything except some fanciful ideals of chivalry. Consider the opening of the *Faerie Queene*: "A gentle Knight was pricking on the plaine." With him was a fair damsel. We are not told where they came from nor where they were going. It is not

necessary, because they are not real people who move from place to place on the earth; they are abstractions — holiness and purity. Their adventures are not such as happen on this earth because they themselves are purposeless and motiveless. All is told in melodious, languorous verse which sounds like music heard in a dream. Compared to the *Iliad* or to the *Battle of Maldon* the difference between the epic and the romance is seen to be very great, and to indicate forms of civilization based on different ideals. In the *Iliad* we are told that a pestilence is devastating the Grecian forces. A pestilence is, of course, owing to the anger of some god. That has been the simple creed of men up to the last two centuries. It is briefly explained how the wrath of the god has been incurred, and how it can be removed by returning to her father a female slave in the possession of the head chief. A council of chiefs is held, and determines that this must be done. The head chief says then that he will take the slave who has been awarded to another subordinate chief. A war of words ensues in which the subordinate tells the leader that he has "the eyes of a dog and the heart of a deer" — that he is impudent and cowardly. The subordinate is restrained by counsels of prudence — represented as a goddess — from open resistance. Both act and talk in a natural and human manner utterly foreign to the conduct of a hero of romance. The consequences of the anger

of the subordinate and the imperiousness of the head are rapidly detailed, and one effect naturally follows another up to the reconciliation and the death of the chief of the Trojans, and through it all men talk naturally. The philosophy of life occasionally disclosed by the author is profoundly true and simple, and as readily appreciated by us as it was by his contemporaries.

The above considerations may serve to outline the difference between the epical and romantic narrative poem. Of course, the epical poem has its own superstitions and impossibilities, but they are not "enchantments drear." Ulysses has about as much trouble with the gods as the Red Cross Knight has with dwarfs, demons, and giants, but the gods themselves act from motives and the hero is always on the real earth or sea. The characters are men and women, not abstractions, and we find dramatic or idyllic passages resulting from the situations and the characters, not forced for obscure allegorical lessons. The romance has its own beauty, though from the fact that the characters are little influenced by human motives or, if so influenced, do not respond in an intelligible manner, it is apt to lack interest.

Chaucer's *Romaunt of the Rose*, the original of which was immensely popular, is an example of an allegorical romance. *Palamon and Arcite* and *Troilus and Criseyde* are romances based on classical tales. In the last the characters are far

more distinctly drawn than is usual in romances, but the atmosphere is entirely chivalric, and the utter disregard of the natural conclusion that the lovers would have married rather than have allowed themselves to be separated is one of the absurdities of romance. Several others of Chaucer's *Tales* are romantic, though he was by nature a great realist.

The romantic spirit has persisted in literature, though observation and common sense is continually pruning its extravagances. Shakespeare's *Love's Labor's Lost* is romantic in plot and conception. The drama demands real characters and Shakespeare's perception of individuality made it impossible for him to write a play without direct reference to human life; so even in the *Winter's Tale*, *Cymbeline*, and the *Tempest*, romanticism is subordinated to truth. *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is romantic both in language and machinery, but Theseus and Hippolyta are solid and dignified personalities, and the clowns who present the play of Pyramus and Thisbe are no doubt realistic copies of Warwickshire carpenters and weavers. In Scott's *Ivanhoe* and *The Talisman* the romantic element preponderates, though there is a leaven of human nature in the characters. Coleridge's *Christabel* is a beautiful romance, and the fact that it is unfinished does not detract from its value, for a romance never has the absolute completeness of a realistic plot. The beauty of the poetry of Keats

is largely the beauty of the romance, and in *Endymion* the incidents follow one another with much of the lack of interdependence that characterizes the older romanticists. Hawthorne viewed the world from the standpoint of the romanticist as a stage where obscure influences controlled action, and the spiritual and occult molded the destinies of men and women, and the power of experience and reason and will were minimized. The plots of his stories are shaped by forces of the world of the imagination and the concatenation of events is unlike that which unites the events of to-day to those of yesterday in the world made familiar to us by observation. But the law of causation, as he conceives it, is rigidly followed out, and in this he is more modern than the early romanticists like Spenser or Sidney, who construct a series of tableaux, and trouble themselves little about any connection between causes and effects. His people and their surroundings, too, are strikingly natural in all exterior matters. They are romantic in the fact that their conduct is regulated by external forces reaching their inner natures from a world outside of them. There is no reason that romanticism should not be true, because {it presents the exceptional in character and conduct. We now explain the exceptional by assuming exceptional antecedent material causes, heredity, malformation of the brain, and the like. Romanticism simply presents it and indirectly refers the explanation to

the moral world. There are essential points of resemblance between the spirit of the chivalric romance and the romance of all subsequent periods.

The foregoing considerations outline the distinction between the race epic and the romantic narrative poem. The two belong to different eras, and as far as poetry is a "criticism of life," an interpretation of the world of men and things, the differences are profound. The one regards the world as a stage where energetic human wills, subject to the most elemental social bonds, work out their destiny under the protection or against the opposition of the gods, and determine by their action the fate of their race or people. The other regards life as essentially mysterious, and the men or women with whom it concerns itself as dominated by a code extremely complicated and irrational in comparison with the simple loyalty of the heroic age. If their designs are frustrated or forwarded by supernatural powers, these too are lawless, unaccountable, and wayward, whether they are embodiments of spite or of benevolence. The difference between the epic and the romantic tale is hardly less than is the difference between either and the scholastic, didactic poetry of the eighteenth century, or the philosophic realism of the *Ring and the Book*.

As the heroic age has long passed, the race epic can no longer be produced. Oral transmission is essential, and in no progressive community is oral

transmission possible after the invention of printing. In a remote district of northern Russia early conditions have been preserved, but the country is too cold and too poor for the development of a race epic. Nevertheless, the people of a district lying on the north shores of Lake Onega have preserved in memory songs which date from the heroic age of Russia. The poverty which has arrested development and prevented the intrusion of modern ideas, has allowed an isolation in which much of the freedom of early times has survived. Serfdom was never established, the country is too unproductive to be taxed, and the soldiers that are annually drafted into the Russian army have been too few in number to affect the character of the community. Few of the people are able to read, and though Christianity became the official religion of Russia in the ninth century, the conceptions of the original cultus are still retained. The community lacks the energy of the heroic age, but has preserved many of the conditions of that age, dwarfed and thwarted by centuries of solitude, but not modified by outside civilization.

In this vast and lonely region of swamps and forests, the traditionary songs of the Slavic race have been handed down unchanged through twenty generations or more by singers corresponding to the Greek rhapsodists who declaimed the *Odyssey* in the halls of chieftains or at the market places of the little towns. But creative power has en-

tirely departed from the Russians who repeat the *bylinas* by rote, using, indeed, many obsolete words, the meaning of which is unknown to them and to their auditors, like the word "aurochs," the hame of a species of wild cattle long extinct in that part of the world. Attention was called to this survival of ancient song by the publication of a number of fragments collected by a government official named Rybnikof in 1861. He was stationed on the western shore of Lake Onega. Fortunately he took a genuine interest in the ancient poetry of his countrymen and made long journeys dressed in the garb of a peasant to hear the recitations of celebrated minstrels. On one of his voyages across Lake Onega he was forced by contrary winds to land on an island where he found a number of peasants, weatherbound like himself. Among them was a tailor, Leonty Bogdanovich, who in the primitive fashion journeyed widely in the Trans-Onega region, working at his trade in the houses where he was needed. He had a great reputation as a reciter of the traditional songs, and Rybnikof was so fortunate as to hear the *Lay of Sadko*, the Russian Ulysses, from his lips. Although the old minstrel's voice was thin and cracked, Rybnikof declares the impression he made, not only on the peasants as they sat round the outdoor fires in the spring night, but on his cultured listener was very remarkable. The peasants apparently, like children, believed every word,



but to him it was something coming out of remote antiquity but still fresh and poetic in a novel sense. The following is paraphrased from Miss Hapgood's *Epic Songs of Russia*. The first is from the lay of Sadko, the merchant of Novgorod, the Russian Ulysses.

"In the glorious city of Novgorod dwelt Sadko, the gusly<sup>1</sup> player. No golden treasure did he possess; he went about to the magnificent feasts of the merchants and nobles and made all merry with his playing. It chanced that one day he was not invited to any feast, and, being rather cast down at this evidence of waning popularity, he went to the shore of Lake Ilmen and sat down on a blue stone and played on his harp of maple wood. The waves rose, and the waters were clouded with sand until Sadko, becoming alarmed by the effect of his music, returned to Novgorod. This happened for three successive days. On the third day the Tzar Vodyanoi — the Water King — emerged from the lake and told him that he had been holding a banquet, and that all his guests had been delighted with the music. In fact it was their energetic dancing that had caused the disturbance on the surface. In gratitude for his entertainment the Water King tells him that next day he will be invited to a banquet, and that after the guests have eaten and drunk they will wax boastful. 'One will boast of his horse, one of the prowess of his youth,

<sup>1</sup> *Gusly* (goozly), an early Russian harp.

one of his old mother, and the senseless fool, of his young wife. Then do thou boast also and say : I know what there is in Lake Ilmen, of a truth fishes with golden fins. Then shall they say that there are no fish of that sort. Then do thou lay a great wager with them, wager thy turbulent head against their shops and all their contents.' Next day it turned out as the Water King had foretold. Sadko took all the bets that were offered, and succeeded in wagering his turbulent head with six of the richest merchants of the city against six well-stocked stores. To settle the question they wove a net of silk, and proceeded to cast it in the Lake. At each cast they took a little fish with fins of pure gold. Sadko received the six shops, and their stocks, enrolled himself among the merchants of Novgorod, and became the richest merchant in Russia. He built a very beautiful palace and gave a great feast, not as a poor harper, but as the opulent host. He began to boast of his treasure and offered to bet thirty thousand rubles that he could buy out the whole town. This bet found takers. Sadko's experience in this trial is described very humorously. He discovered the law of political economy that demand creates supply. After his thirty buyers had been hard at work for some time, it was discovered that a vast store of goods had been forwarded from Moscow. Then Sadko fell into thought : 'If I buy all these goods from Moscow, others will flow hither from beyond

the sea, and I am not able to buy all the wares of the whole white world. Sadko is rich, but glorious Novgorod is still richer. It is better to yield my great wager.' This he wisely did, but, being now overstocked, he built thirty ships, thirty dark red ships and three. With these he sailed into the Neva, and on into the blue sea, directing his course to Constantinople. Here he sold out to very good advantage for gold and silver and pearls. On the return the ships halted, the waves dashed, the breeze whistled, the cordage strained, but they could not move the ships from that place. The sounding lead showed deep water, and there was no explanation except that the Sea King, the Tzar Morskoi, was detaining them. After various attempts to propitiate him by casting into the sea gold and silver and pearls, then spake Sadko: 'My brave beloved bodyguard, it is plain that the Tzar Morskoi calleth a living man from among us into his blue sea. Make ye therefore lots of alder wood and let each man write his name upon them and the lots of all just souls shall float, but that man among us whose lot sinketh, he also shall go from among us into the blue sea.' This was done and repeated three times, but always Sadko's lot sank. Then said Sadko, the rich merchant, 'Tis plain that Sadko can do nothing. The Tzar Morskoi demandeth Sadko himself in the blue sea. Then, ho! my brave beloved guards, fetch me my massive inkstand, my swan-quill pen, and

my paper.' His brave beloved men brought him his inkstand, pen, and paper; and Sadko, the rich merchant of Novgorod, sat in his folding chair at his oaken table and began to write away his possessions. Much gave he to God's churches, much to his young wife, much to the poor brethren, and the remainder of his possessions he bestowed upon his bodyguard.

"After that he wept and spake to his men, 'Ai, my men, well loved and brave, place ye an oaken plank on the blue sea, so that I Sadko may throw myself upon the plank, so that it shall not be terrible to me to take my death on the blue sea. And fill ye, brothers, a bowl with red gold, another with silver, another with seed pearls, and place them on the plank.' Then took he in his right hand an image of St. Michael, and in his left his harp of maple wood with its fine strings of gold, and put on him a rich cloak of sables, and bitterly he wept as he bade farewell to his brave company, to the white world, and to Novgorod the glorious. He descended upon the oaken plank and was borne upon the blue sea, and his dark red ships sped on and flew as if they had been black ravens. Then was Sadko, the rich merchant of Novgorod, greatly terrified as he floated over the blue sea on his plank of oak, and he fell asleep, and lo! when he awoke it was at the very bottom of the ocean sea. He beheld the red sun shining through the clear waves, and he was standing beside a palace

of white stone, where sat the Tzar Morskoi with head like a heap of hay on his royal throne."

The account of Sadko's adventures in the sea, and his final return to the upper world are more poetical, or rather handled more imaginatively, than what has gone before, and it is distantly suggestive of the visits to the underworld of Orpheus and Ulysses.

The tale of Svyatogor, the Russian Hercules, is more elevated in tone, but not on that account more epical than the former. Svyatogor, who belongs to the older mythological cycle, meets Ilya of Murom, the "peasant hero," the poetic embodiment of the Slavic race. After a series of adventures in which the superhuman gigantic character of Svyatogor is portrayed, they swear brotherhood and exchange crosses in token of friendship.

"Then they rode together and Svyatogor taught Ilya all heroic customs and traditions. Svyatogor said to Ilya, 'When we shall come to my dwelling, and I shall lead thee to my blind father, heat a bit of iron, but give him not thy hand.'

"So when they came to the Holy Mountains, to the palace of white stone, Svyatogor's father cried:—

"'Ai, my dear child! Hast thou been far afield?'

"'I have been in Holy Russia, father.'

"'What hast thou seen and heard there?'

“ ‘Nothing have I seen or heard in Holy Russia, but I have brought with me thence a hero.’ The old man was blind, and so said : —

“ ‘Bring hither the Russian hero, that I may greet him.’

“In the meantime Ilya had heated a bit of iron in the fire ; and when he came to give the old man his hand in greeting, he gave him in the place of it the iron. And when the old man grasped it in his mighty hands, he said, ‘Stout are thy hands, Ilya of Murom, a most mighty warrior art thou.’

“Afterward Svyatogor and his younger brother journeyed among the Holy Mountains, and on the way they found a great coffin of stone, and upon the side was written, ‘This coffin shall fit him who is destined to lie in it.’ Then Ilya tried to lie in it, but it was both too long and too wide for him. But when Svyatogor lay in it, it exactly fitted him. Then the elder hero spake these words : ‘The coffin was destined for me. Take the lid now, Ilya, and cover me.’ Ilya made answer, ‘I will not take the lid, elder brother, neither will I cover thee. Lo, this is no small jest that thou makest, preparing to entomb thyself.’

“Then the hero himself took the lid and covered the coffin with it ; but when he would have raised it again, he could not, though he strove and strained mightily. Then he spake to Ilya : ‘’Tis plain my fate has sought me out. I cannot raise the lid ; do thou now try to lift it.’ Then Ilya strove, but

could not. Said hero Svyatogor, 'Take my great battle sword, and smite athwart the lid.' But Ilya's strength was not enough to lift the sword and Svyatogor called to him : —

" 'Bend down to the rift in the coffin that I may breathe upon you with my heroic breath.' When Ilya had done this, he felt strength within him thrice as much as before. He lifted the great battle sword, and smote athwart the lid. Sparks flashed from that blow, but where the great brand struck, an iron ridge sprang forth. Again spoke Svyatogor : —

" 'I stifle, younger brother ; essay yet one more blow upon the lid with my huge sword.' Then Ilya smote along the lid — and a ridge of iron sprang forth. Yet again spake Svyatogor : —

" 'I die, O younger brother. Bend down now to the crevice. Yet once again will I breathe upon thee, and give thee all my vast strength.'

" But Ilya made answer, 'My strength sufficeth me, elder brother ; had I more, the earth could not bear me.'

" 'Thou hast done well, younger brother,' said Svyatogor, 'in that thou hast not obeyed my last request. I should have breathed upon thee the breath of death, and thou wouldst have lain dead beside me. But now, farewell. Possess thou my great battle sword, but bind my good, heroic steed to my coffin ; none save Svyatogor may possess that horse.'

" Then a dying breath fluttered through the crev-

ice. Ilya took leave of Hero Svyatogor, bound the good, heroic steed to the coffin, put the great battle sword about his waist, and rode forth into the open plain.

“And Svyatogor’s burning tears flow through that crevice evermore.”

We might regard this fragment as “nature religion,” an effort to explain imaginatively the gushing of a hot spring as the tears of the demigod. Or we might interpret the death of the older hero as figuring the passing of the heathen cultus, the iron cross sealing its coffin irrevocably. The newer cultus inherits part of the spirit of the earlier as Ilya is strengthened by the breath of Svyatogor; but if it should receive more than it could assimilate of the old philosophy, the inheritance would prove fatal. Christianity can take over part of the liturgy and formal worship of Rome, and much of the thought of Plato with safety; but should it take both without reservation, it would be “breathed on by the breath of death.” Not much ingenuity is needed to interpret mythological stories, as there is no way to test the interpretation. To assume that any occult reference to inner significance was consciously made by the originators of archaic poetry would be as irrational as to find a cipher in the mispunctuations of the text of Shakespeare’s plays, or a solution of social problems in the conduct of the plots. Nevertheless, natural poetry has a connection with all the social developments of the



earlier times, especially with religious thought ; and a symbolism, due to an unconscious reaction in the poet's mind of different phases through which the race is passing, may find expression in verse, or, indeed, in any art. This is especially true of the northern races. The symbolical interpretation, though conjectural, is not entirely unjustifiable.

These Russian tales, though containing a romantic element, are essentially epic in their simplicity, and in that they are evidently written for the people, that is, not for a segregated aristocratic class. Though not based on national events like the epics of war, they are entirely racial. In the first the "bodyguard" is at once an armed retinue and a set of business associates and of confidential friends. Trade has none of the stigma which chivalry, the parent of romance, puts upon it. The songs are essentially national and Russian in the fatalistic attitude of the heroes. The deaths of both Sadko and Svyatogor are suicides. Neither meets death in the defiant manner of the Teuton. Sadko does not leap into the water in an exalted mood. He bows passively to fate in the dumb, uncomplaining Slavic manner of one of Tolstoi's peasants, singing no triumphant death song, weeping, but not faltering. His comrades do not offer to accompany him, for their time has not come. When Svyatogor finds that the stone coffin fits him, he says, "It is plain that my fate has found me out ;" and his comrade rides away after the

entombment without a word of lamentation. The epic of a people more alien to us in temperament than any other of the European races shows us how intimately poetry reflects race character, especially that part of character which is least superficial, but most controlling and distinctive.

Of the heroic songs of the Anglo-Saxon or English race *Beowulf* is the most considerable in length. The fragmentary war song, *The Battle of Maldon*, describing a fight between the forces of the "Earl" Birhtnoth and a party of Danish pirates is epical in tone, and, as well as several other fragments, is evidently the expression of a community in which the early relations of chieftain and comrades still prevailed. The duties of loyalty to the little community or tribe, of service to this limited public, and of meeting death unflinchingly in the combat, are the substratum of the primitive ethics of our forefathers. On an implicit recognition of these duties national greatness is built, and it explains much of subsequent history to find them recognized without question by our ancestors more than ten centuries ago. There is a touch of the fantastic ethics of chivalry when Birhtnoth withdraws his men from the river bank, and allows the Danes to cross unmolested, but the act seems to be prompted by a desire to get them over, that the fight may come off, rather than by an absurd unwillingness on the part of the captain to utilize any advantage he may have over

the pirates. Birhtnoth is killed, some of his men fly, but the "old companion," Birhtwolf, prefers to die by the body of his chief. His defiance of death embodies the unconquerable temper of our race. His ethical vision is unclouded by any self-consciousness or thought of theatrical effect.

Then spoke Birhtwolf,  
Raising his shield,  
He was an old comrade.  
He shook his javelin.  
With firm words  
He advised the fighting men ;  
" Mind shall be the harder,  
Heart the more resolute,  
Our mood shall be the firmer  
The more our strength lessens.  
Here lies our leader  
Slain in the contest,  
A true man in the dust.  
May he be accursed  
Who has a mind to leave  
This war-play.  
I am old of years,  
But I will not stir  
From this spot.  
I am willing to lie  
By the side of my chief,  
The man I loved."

It is impossible to give in any other medium but Old English the spirit of the poem and the impres-

sion of actually hearing the crash of the swords and spears on the wooden shields.

This poem is but a fragment, a description of a fight without introduction or conclusion. *Beowulf* is not only many times as long, but it is much more comprehensive. It embodies the familiarity of the old English race with the sea as well as its courage and love of conflict, and its conceptions of fealty and duty. It reflects the character of a race lacking in the artistic power of the Greeks, but superior to them in directness and simplicity of moral vision and more capable of heroic sacrifice. The real value of early epic poetry is that it shows us what the original ideals of a people were and gives us a glimpse of fundamental qualities which still persist in their descendants and come to the surface when circumstances have removed the technical restraints of civilization and men of our race appeal to the wager of battle. } The "old companion" still stands by his comrade in frontier warfare as steadfastly as Birhtwolf did by Birhtnoth on the shore of the river Panta, and dies in much the same matter-of-course way. The defense of the Alamo was as epic as the battle of Maldon, though chronicled in a different fashion. Fundamental race temper is not easily extinguished except by long-continued national corruption of law and morals, and is even taken up by foreigners amalgamated with the dominant race unless the proportion of the aliens be so great that they retain their own language

through several generations. This race temper we can see best in the poetry of a race before it takes on the artificial conditions of modern civilization, modern, that is, in the sense of being later than the twelfth century.

In the northern or Scandinavian branch of the Germanic race the heroic age was productive in mythological legends of a vague magnificence. The story of Brunhild and Sigurd, broad and powerfully conceived, is told in fragments never reduced to a coherent systematic poem by a great epic singer. Another portion of the same body of material, the revenge of Kriemhild, forms the subject of the old German epic the *Nibelungenlied*. It is not to be expected that the heroic age of every people should produce epical poems of the beauty of the *Iliad*, the artistic sense is not granted to all in the same measure, and the capacity of northern and southern languages for poetic expression is widely different — but simplicity and elemental force are characteristic of the early poems of the Germanic races. A wild, free delight in fighting is emphasized in them and they are marked by an absence of literary affectation and of fanciful ornament. The characters are greatly conceived and occasional passages are of the highest force as poetry. The subjects are of broad national or rather racial interest. In none of the Teutonic fragmentary tales, unless it be in the *Battle of Maldon* is any effort made to attain historical

accuracy or consistent chronology. Different versions of the stories vary in the importance assigned to various episodes, in the names given to the personages, and in the conception of the characters. It would seem as if the different singers composed their songs independently and without deference to a recognized authority. They suggest the idea that, though magnificent conceptions and poetic passages of wonderful beauty may be produced by a body of singers working over national material through successive generations, a great artist, an individual, is necessary to select, reject, and arrange the material in his own mind before a unified poem, instinct with the racial spirit, rises out of the chaos.

In our language *Paradise Lost* is the only successful attempt at the "epic of art," the long narrative poem in which the characters are moved by primitive and elemental motives and express themselves in more or less dramatic dialogue, and the plot or action is dignified and the style elevated. In *Marmion*, Scott describes the battle of Flodden with great animation, but the romantic sophistication of manner is entirely opposed to dignified epical realism. Malory's compilation of the Arthurian legends is a romance, though, as said before, the strength of the passion depicted in the final book and the tragic catastrophe of the death of Arthur are epical in force. But the death and translation of the king is surrounded with a mystery which is

essentially romantic. The central theme, the downfall of the Celtic power in Britain is of epical dignity, but the quest of the Holy Grail is an entirely romantic motif. The compilation, made in the fifteenth century, long after the heroic age, is colored throughout by romantic symbolism, and its beauty is the unsubstantial beauty of the romance. It is the uncompleted epic of the Celtic race transmuted by the mediæval imagination of the ages of chivalry into something rich and strange, not a reflection of human life as the heroic epics are, but a reflection of a dream of life.

The purest romantic narrative is Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. Its symbolism and languorous harmony carry us at once into a world where the ordinary motives of human beings — love, jealousy, ambition, and anger, to say nothing of ordinary everyday hunger, — have no part. At the foundation of the poem lies a Puritanic regard for chastity, honor, and unselfish devotion not unworthy of Milton himself, but the virtues are possessed by one set of characters and the vices by another, and the narrative is largely independent of both. Things happen because the narrator wills them to, not because the people act. It is pleasant to get into a country where "the perverse contrarious wills of men recede" and leave a "little isle of peace unvexed by human nature," and there is no reason to believe that romantic literature is, in any way, weakening to the practical intellect. England was

never more obstinately practical than at the time when romantic fiction was the admired method of depicting life imaginatively. Spenser himself was a methodical clerk of the Council and did not mix his dreams and his duties. Romance is a legitimate department of literature. The chivalric romance is antiquated, no doubt, but there is much in modern literature, even when it assumes to be realistic, that is as impossible as Una and her lion, and not nearly as suggestive of radical truth.

The romance and the epic are modes of poetic representations of life adapted to different phases of the human consciousness. In a general way, these phases distinguish different periods of historical development. It is only in a broad sense that they can be called poetic forms since they are not at all distinguished by verbal embodiment. Shakespeare is the only man who could express himself at will in either mode. *Richard III*, *Lear*, and *Macbeth* are instinct with the energy of the human will, *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest* and *A Winter's Tale* are romances. In the latter group the female characters are tenderly and delicately drawn, in the former the male characters are of Titanic energy. Both are muniments to his title of supreme poet.

Dante's great poem is certainly not epical except in the simplicity and homeliness of the similes. Nor is it a romance; the passion is too intense and earnest. Rapturous adoration of an



ideal of purity, and subjective religious mysticism are elements of the romantic spirit, but the great vision of heaven and hell is seen too distinctly and described too realistically to be called a romance. It must be classified apart.

Other divisions of poetry as didactic poetry, which, strictly speaking, is not poetry at all, but only rhymed sermonizing, will not be considered. The function of poetry is not to argue or expound, but to teach indirectly and not through an appeal to the intellect but to the æsthetic sense. The finest poetry in our language is dramatic, but the drama is too large and distinct a subject to come under the general head of forms of verse. The drama, too, is a mixed form and appeals quite as much to the eye as to the ear — we form a visual image of the speakers and scene even in reading a play. Satiric and humorous verse might form the subject of chapters, but no attempt is made at exhaustive treatment or even exhaustive classification in this book. If enough has been said to arouse interest in poetry and to show that art, even technical art, is a serious and worthy subject, the author's object is accomplished.

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